

Ann Bartlett: Navy Nurse**MARTHA JOHNSON**

TO be a nurse in the United States Navy—that was the goal which Ann Bartlett worked toward during her training period in the Mount Royal General Hospital in Kansas. Good health and an excellent record gave her the opportunity to serve a six-month probationary period in the huge Naval Hospital in Philadelphia.

Then began a round of new faces, hard work, fun, and discipline. The job was not easy, for Navy standards brook no laxness. Ann soon learned that excuses never take the place of efficiency in the "service."

After the probationary period ended, she was rewarded with her commission, and the right to wear the cap banded with gold braid, and the naval insignia on her collar.

Navy people are always on the move, and soon she went to the Naval Hospital at Parris Island. More excitement, hard work, and fun! Then came duty on a hospital ship, and a period at the naval base in the Hawaiian Islands, where it was difficult to place work and discipline ahead of moonlight and flowers and romance. But each place at which she was stationed broadened her views and deepened her feeling of service toward her country and mankind.

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*It's your War, too***"They give their lives.****You lend your money."**

WE'VE all seen those words on War Bond posters. How many of us have really thought what they mean? Most of us have brothers and sisters who are in the Army or Navy or Marine Corps. They have "given their lives" to the terrible work of fighting; they have sacrificed everything to this one job.

We who must stay at home have a job to do, too. We can't let other people do all the work for us. There is something we can do and those posters tell us what it is. "Lend your money." That means that you must buy War Bonds and Stamps. When your high school is asked to help in a Bond Rally, that's your chance to get in the fight, too. Go out and sell as many bonds and stamps as you can—sell more than you think you can. This war is the most expensive war that was ever fought in the history of the world. It costs millions of dollars a day. The Government depends on all of us, young and old, to lend those millions of dollars for victory.

Remember, it's your war, too. Your brothers and sisters are fighting. You can't let them down. This is your chance—the one big opportunity you have to help win the war. Buy War Bonds and Stamps as your share in the fight.

**ANN BARTLETT
RETURNS to the PHILIPPINES**

The Adventures of a Navy Nurse
by **MARTHA JOHNSON**

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ANN BARTLETT
RETURNS TO THE PHILIPPINES

By the Author

ANN BARTLETT: NAVY NURSE

ANN BARTLETT AT BATAAN

ANN BARTLETT IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC

ANN BARTLETT RETURNS TO THE PHILIPPINES

KATE RUSSELL: WARTIME NURSE

SANDRA MITCHELL STANDS BY

ANN BARTLETT
RETURNS TO THE
PHILIPPINES

Martha Johnson

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY
NEW YORK

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For wartime reasons, locations of military installations mentioned in this book have been purposely changed. All the characters are fictitious, and no reference is made or intended to any actual person, living or dead.

1

“ ‘ASSIGNMENTS to duty for week beginning Monday, September 18, 1944. United States Naval Hospital, San Diego, California.’ ”

“Don’t read all that. We know where we are, and the date, too,” exclaimed an impatient voice. “I want to know where I’m assigned.”

The nurses near the bulletin board at the entrance to the dining room laughed and pushed closer to the board, evidently feeling much the same as the nurse who had spoken about this deliberate reading of the monthly assignment sheet.

But Sue Justice, who had gained a vantage point near the board, was not to be put off by her friends’ none too gentle hints that she come to the interesting part of the notice sheet. She continued to read a few miscellaneous paragraphs of information, irrelevant to the subject that had brought them to the bulletin. A chorus of groans and hisses greeted her performance, but when she suddenly exclaimed in a delighted shout, “Look! ‘Lieutenant Susan Justice, Ward Nurse of Operational Four.’ Wonderful! Just what I wanted!” the others refused to listen to her any longer. Two of her friends lifted her from behind by her elbows and deposited her outside the group.

Sue, not one whit abashed by her summary dismissal, made a face and then laughed. She was a born tease, and any practical joking that went on in the nurses’ quarters could be traced with unfailing accuracy to her. But Sue, with her light flyaway hair, her gay and pretty face, was too general a favorite for anyone to be offended by her lively

love of a joke. Another factor operated in her favor also; she was Ann Bartlett's particular friend and companion at the big naval hospital, and anyone who was a friend of Ann's was sure to receive some measure of approbation from that fact alone.

"How about telling me where Ann's assigned," demanded Sue suddenly.

"Chief in OR Three," replied a voice near the board. "Where is Ann? I should think she'd be anxious to—"

But Sue did not wait to hear the rest of the sentence. With an airy gesture of farewell, she turned and ran down the hall that led to the main entrance. She paused a moment on the steps and drew a long breath. It never failed to affect her—this tremendous expanse and multitude of buildings that made up the San Diego Naval Hospital. From where she stood they seemed to form a city in themselves: the towering main structures containing the wards and operating rooms, and all the smaller buildings that clustered around them. All of Balboa Park—once San Diego's recreational area—had been taken over by the Navy to accommodate this vast hospital.

"Nine thousand patients." Sue spoke aloud and shook her head in wonder. If she had not known of her own experience that so many could be cared for in one hospital, it would not have seemed possible. In its equipment, personnel, and accommodation the hospital was one of the largest in the world and, even though Sue had been serving on its nursing staff for nearly a year, she never lost the sense of pride and gratitude that she was a part of its functioning.

Now she glanced down the path that led toward the Administration Building and hesitated. She knew where Ann was and, much as she wished to let her know the good news of her latest assignment to duty, she wondered whether she dared seek her out to tell her. It occurred to her that Ann might not consider the assignment in the

same light as she did. Knowing where Ann was at this moment, and what she was doing there, gave Sue reason to pause. One did not go bursting into the chief nurse's office on so slight a pretext as this, even though Miss Hartwell was not one who stood on ceremony. Perhaps it would be just as well to wait here on the steps and catch Ann when she came from the Administration Building. It would not mean a long wait; Ann's appointment with Miss Hartwell had been for four o'clock, and it was four-thirty now. Sue sat down on a bench by the door and resigned herself to inactivity.

Though she sat quietly with every appearance of calm, Sue's mind was busy with a problem. The problem concerned Ann, and it worried her. Slowly she counted on her fingers. Yes, it had been January of this year that she and Ann had been transferred from the naval hospital in Sydney, Australia, to San Diego. Only nine months ago, and already Ann was restless; she wanted to move on, to go where there was more activity. As though one did not have all the work and responsibility one could wish in a hospital of this size. Sue sighed heavily; sometimes she didn't really understand Ann. Of all the nurses in the Navy Nurse Corps Ann Bartlett could claim her share and more of excitement and activity; and yet she wished to be nearer the battle lines, to feel that she was doing more and working harder. Sue did not need to be told this; she knew Ann well enough to realize that this was the reason for her present state of mind.

She turned her thoughts back to the early days of her friendship with Ann. That had been in 1941, just before Pearl Harbor. They had been stationed on the same hospital ship, the *Sea Haven*; Sue permitted herself a wry smile as she remembered those easy days before the country had gone to war. It had been a different world; a pleasant, comfortable world in which one could enjoy the duty of caring for the sick aboard ship. Then had come the

horror and evil of the infamous attack on Pearl Harbor. She and Ann had been in Hawaii then; they had seen what war meant; the suffering, heroism, and courage of the wounded. Through all the hell and agony of war, her work as a Navy Nurse had shown her of what stuff Americans were made. She was proud of her fellow countrymen and proud of the opportunity to serve them.

Ann felt as she did; one could not be a friend of Ann's and not know this. And Ann had had an even greater opportunity to prove her willingness to serve. Both girls had gone to the Philippines in the *Sea Haven*, but it was Ann who, through a series of adventures and misadventures, had been with the Army Nurses in that heroic and tragic retreat down the Bataan peninsula to Corregidor. Her escape from the fortress and her subsequent arrival in Australia had not ended Ann's peculiar ability to find herself in the midst of events that formed no part of the daily curriculum of a Navy Nurse. Sue sighed almost enviously as she remembered that it was Ann who had been selected to fly to the rescue of a high-ranking officer, who had been wounded when his plane was forced down on an island north of New Guinea. The rescue plane had never reached him, for Ann and the pilot had crashed in the jungles of New Guinea and for weeks had been given up for lost. The miracle that resulted in her safe return to Australia had been no more startling than the fact that she had been instrumental in saving the life of Bruce Mitchell during the course of those long weeks in the jungle.

Sue shook her head with awed admiration. Nothing could have been more romantic, she told herself. Bruce, of all people. No one but Ann could have such luck. Bruce was Ann's fiancé; they had been engaged for almost three years when news came that his plane had crashed somewhere north of Australia. Sue remembered Ann's face when she heard the news and the stricken look she had worn for weeks afterward. But Ann had kept the hope

alive that he was not dead, and her faith had been justified.

"And after it's all over she gets the Silver Star for gallantry," said Sue aloud. "I guess it's—"

"It's what? What in the world are you sitting here talking to yourself for?"

The light voice startled Sue as though it were a clap of thunder. She jumped violently and glanced up to see Ann standing beside her, looking down at her with pretended concern. A faint wind ruffled the dark softly curling hair beneath her nurse's cap, and her blue eyes seemed to sparkle with more than their usual vivacity. Whoever in the world could think that Ann Bartlett was not pretty, thought Sue irrelevantly, as she moved aside to give Ann room on the bench. Of course her features were not exactly perfect; her nose tilted upward and her mouth was rather larger than the classic model. Sue looked at her friend speculatively and suddenly smiled. That was the effect Ann had on everyone. You couldn't look at her without catching some of her fresh and vital personality. Her eyes were so blue and friendly, her coloring so brilliant; it did one good just to look at her.

"You haven't answered my question," said Ann, as she took her place beside Sue. "You look as though you were trying to solve the problems of the world."

"No, only those of one person—you," replied Sue soberly.

It was unusual for the lighthearted Sue to speak so solemnly, and Ann turned to give her a closer look. "Mel! What makes you think that I need worrying about? I'm all right—at least—" She hesitated and frowned. "What are you waiting here for?" she went on, changing the subject hastily.

"To tell you the new assignment sheet is out. You're to be chief in OR Three. I thought you'd like to know." But Sue's reverie while she waited for Ann had taken some of the first enthusiasm from her news; the knowledge that

Ann was restless at the hospital had robbed her of her first joy in the fact that both she and Ann had received good assignments.

Ann received the news as calmly as Sue had given it. "I know," she said. "Miss Hartwell told me when I was in her office." She glanced at her watch. "Only half an hour until dinner."

"No," exclaimed Sue, catching Ann's arm. "We don't have to hurry at all. Ann, there's something I'd like to know. Why don't you like it here at the hospital? I know why you went to Miss Hartwell this afternoon; you want to get a transfer." The last words were spoken almost accusingly as Sue tried to read the answer to her question in Ann's eyes.

For a moment Ann seemed confused and Sue was afraid that she had spoken out of turn, that she had no right to question her friend so closely. Then Ann saw Sue's worried expression and smiled.

"Don't worry, Sue. You can ask me anything you want; you know that. Yes, I did ask Miss Hartwell for a transfer. It's not that I don't like it here, because I do." She looked out over the wide stretch of grounds and the many buildings that made up the huge hospital. "How could anyone not like to feel a part of this?" she said. "You can't work with the patients here without being grateful for a chance to help them. We see men who've come from every part of the Pacific where there is action, and we know what they have sacrificed. I love it here; I think the hospital is doing a magnificent job, and I'm glad to be a part of it, however small my job may be. But—" Again she hesitated.

"That's it—'but!' " exclaimed Sue. "Here you've just landed a good duty and you're still not satisfied. I don't see why."

"I do!" Ann's voice hardened and she spoke almost fiercely. "I can't feel that it's right for me to be so—so safe,

to have such a comfortable life when out there—" She did not finish, but gestured toward the harbor. Part of it was visible between two of the buildings before them, and in the narrow strip of water they could see the shapes of the warships that crowded near the docks or were anchored in the bay. Beyond the harbor, wide, blue, stretching on to the far horizon, was the Pacific. Ann stared out past the ships, away to the dim horizon line with eyes that saw nothing of what lay within her field of vision. She saw the tropic islands and continents beyond: Guadalcanal, the Solomons, the Gilberts, the Marshalls, the Marianas; those islands where American soldiers, sailors, and marines had fought and died. She had seen many of them; she knew something of the high cost of winning them from the Japanese; she remembered Bataan and Corregidor from her own experience and what it was like to live and fight in the tropical jungles of New Guinea. No, she told herself with all the ardor of conviction, it's not right for me to be here. She knew that there was no reason for her to feel as she did, that her work at the hospital was of urgent importance. But she had been through so much, seen what it was to be in the front line of battle, and she could not be satisfied until she was once again a part of this life.

Sue was silent for some minutes. Merely by seeing the expression in Ann's eyes she knew what she was thinking; she did not feel that way herself, but she understood Ann—in part at least. Ann had lived the war too fully, been a part of it too long to find any satisfaction in duty ashore.

"Did Miss Hartwell give you any hope of a transfer?" she asked. "I suppose you want a hospital ship."

Ann nodded. Then she awoke from her reverie, and once again her face was alive with its usual look of vivacity. "Sue, what do you think? The *Sea Haven*, our old ship, you remember, is due to put in at San Diego any time, and Miss Hartwell promised to let me put in for a transfer to

her. Isn't it wonderful? I never really thought she'd consent; I haven't been stationed here long enough to warrant a transfer."

"I know, you convinced her," said Sue glumly. "You could convince a mule when you get that 'duty-first' look in your eyes."

Ann laughed. "Of course she'd never have let me if she hadn't just got word that the *Sea Haven* was coming in, and she knows they'll be changing personnel. I never dreamed of such a chance. Now I'll really get into it."

Sue sighed as she got to her feet. "It's all right for you to feel so set up, but where does that leave me? I was so pleased to think we had a duty together again, and now you're leaving. I know I'll be here another year anyway. I don't have any pull."

"Pull? What are you talking about?" Ann was genuinely indignant as she rose to follow Sue into the nurses' quarters.

Sue grinned. "Teacher's pet," she said. "Everyone knows that Ann Bartlett is—"

Ann made a dive for her and Sue escaped through the door and shut it squarely in Ann's face. She clung to the doorknob and called through the glass partition, "Promise not to beat me up and I'll let you in."

Ann made a face at her and then nodded her agreement. One couldn't stay angry at Sue, but she did hate it when Sue teased her like this. There was no favoritism in the Nurse Corps; one didn't get the duty one wanted just by asking for it. But Ann knew she was lucky nonetheless and realized that if the *Sea Haven* had not been due to arrive at San Diego, her plea that she obtain duty on a hospital ship might have come to nothing.

The two girls went to their room to prepare for dinner, the subject of their recent argument forgotten. But the thought that Ann would soon be leaving the hospital was not so easily put aside.

"When do you think you'll leave?" asked Sue, as she adjusted her cap before the mirror.

Ann shook her head. "You can't tell. The *Sea Haven* isn't even in port yet, and heaven knows how long she will stay once she does arrive. I'll be here for some time still, don't you worry." Ann spoke cheerfully, but she could not help wishing that she had more definite information as to the length of time that must pass before she once more found herself nearer the battle area. She brushed her hair quickly and thrust her cap on her head without so much as glancing into the mirror.

"What's the hurry?" demanded Sue. "We have ten minutes and—"

"Thought I'd see if I had any mail in my box before dinner," replied Ann. She sounded casual, but there was an overtone in her voice that made Sue look at her quickly.

"There isn't," she announced. "I looked before I went out on the steps." Sue was very busy adjusting her uniform as she spoke; she did not want to see Ann's face just now, for she knew the disappointment that shadowed it. Sue bit her lips. Ann had no family, only an aunt who lived in Kansas and who had brought Ann up. The aunt seldom wrote, for she was old and feeble, and Ann's sole correspondents were the friends she had made during her years in the Navy. But Sue knew that Ann did not worry about not hearing from these friends; there was only one person Ann wanted to hear from, and it had been weeks since she had had a letter from him. How can Bruce be so mean as not to write, Sue asked herself angrily. He's engaged to Ann; he ought to write to her.

Ann must have read Sue's thoughts, for she took her hand and gave it a convulsive squeeze. "Good old Sue," she said, trying to speak lightly. "You'd get mad for my sake over any apparent slight. Don't get mad at Bruce. I'm not. I—I know it's not his fault. He's—he's—" But Ann gave up her attempt at courage then and, sitting down on

the edge of the bed, allowed the tears to run down her cheeks unchecked.

Sue gazed at her for a moment in undisguised alarm and then ran to put her arms about her. "Don't cry over any old man," she exclaimed. "You haven't told me anything about Bruce in ages and I didn't want to ask, but what is it? I don't understand why you don't hear from him. I've been watching the mails and I know you haven't had a letter in months."

Sue spoke so fiercely that Ann could not help smiling in spite of her tears. She wiped her eyes and made a determined effort to control herself. "I'm just being silly," she said. "Bruce wrote me way back in June that I mustn't expect to hear from him very often for a while. But I didn't think he meant that I wasn't going to hear at all."

"What in the world is he up to?" demanded Sue. "Why can't he write?"

Ann shook her head. "I don't know. His last letter sounded so mysterious I couldn't make anything of it. I have an idea he's on special duty of some sort, but that's all I know. Well, there's no use in—" Her sentence was cut short by the sharp ring of the bell announcing dinner, and Ann got quickly to her feet. "Forget it, Sue. I don't usually act so weak-minded. Come on down to dinner. I'm about starved."

Ann made a good pretense of forgetting her worry about Bruce all during dinner, but Sue was not easily deceived. She knew what Bruce meant to Ann, how much she depended on him, and how deeply in love with him she was. Sue herself was engaged to a friend of Bruce's, Bob McCarthy, a pilot attached to a Pacific Fleet squadron, but the course of her romance had run more smoothly than Ann's. She heard from Bob with comfortable regularity; she knew where he was and what he was doing much of the time. Though she was never unconscious of the fact that he lived with danger, it helped tremendously to get his

frequent letters. What must it be like to go for weeks without a letter as Ann did? Sue shuddered at the very idea.

The new schedule of duties did not go into effect until the following day at eight in the morning, so the girls had the evening before them. They considered the possibility of going to the movies in town, but finally decided that the best course was to go to bed early. Their recent duty had been at night, and they both felt the lack of sleep. The subject of Bruce was not mentioned again, but Sue knew by Ann's abstracted manner that he was seldom out of her thoughts. It made Sue feel both angry and sad to realize that Ann should have to go through so much doubt and worry.

"You know," she announced when they were in bed and the lights were out, "I have a funny feeling that you're going to hear something about Bruce very soon now."

Ann did not reply. Sue was somewhat given to claiming prophetic powers and Ann was accustomed to revelations of this sort. But long after Sue was asleep, Ann lay awake wondering if she dared put any faith in Sue's prognostication.

Ann had been on duty in the operating room before, but never as chief nurse of a particular room. By the time she reported in OR Three the next morning, the other two nurses and the corpsmen assigned to serve under her were already there. She busied herself in seeing that all the supplies and equipment were in readiness for the first operation of the day. Dr. Revell, a famous New York surgeon who had joined the ranks of the Naval Reserve, was scheduled to perform an abdominal operation, and Ann was glad of the opportunity to assist him. The surgeon was a specialist in such cases and Ann rightly felt that it was a privilege to see him work.

"Did you hear that the patient is a man that's just been flown in from Hawaii?" asked one of the nurses who was helping Ann set up the instrument table. "He's an enlisted

man who was picked up from a raft somewhere in the Philippine area—or so I understand—and he's been sent here especially so Dr. Revell can operate on him."

"Must be badly off or the doctors in Hawaii could have fixed him up all right," said another. "They have everything in the world to work with out there."

"Except Dr. Revell," finished the other emphatically.

"From the Philippine area you say?" asked Ann who had been listening attentively.

The nurse nodded. "So I heard. He was on a raft and—"

But she was interrupted by the entrance of the patient, who was wheeled in on a stretcher by two corpsmen. The nurses had no further chance for talk, for they must prepare the man for the operation. The anesthetic apparatus was brought forward and the technician got ready to give the anesthesia. Ann was so busy directing the other nurses and corpsmen in the work of preparation that she was scarcely conscious that the patient was talking almost continuously in a confused, disjointed flow of words that made little sense. The man, badly wounded, had been operated on before, but complications had resulted which had caused him to be sent here for a special operation by Dr. Revell. He was delirious much of the time and, as Ann helped remove the dressings that covered his wounds, she realized how serious his condition was.

Dr. Revell appeared at her side. He had entered so quietly that she had not known he was in the room until he said suddenly, "Ready, Miss Bartlett? Superintend the anesthesia please."

Ann moved quickly to the apparatus and motioned the technician to place the cone over the patient's face. She glanced at Dr. Revell for a moment and felt a surge of confidence. Her first sight of the patient had told her how narrow a margin lay between life and death for him and she had felt that there was little hope. But the small, quick-moving man who stood by the table made her feel sud-

denly more hopeful. She had seen Dr. Revell many times before in the hospital, but never as he was about to perform an operation. He might look like a nervous, worried little man at other times, but once dressed in his white gown and mask he seemed extraordinarily calm and competent.

It took some time for the patient to submit to the ether. He fought for consciousness, and his jumbled words and exclamations became more frequent. Ann leaned forward to look at him, trying to see in his eyes if the anesthesia were having any effect. The man looked directly at her, almost as though he recognized her. Then for the first time he spoke clearly.

"The Boss knows," he said. "You ask Mitch—Mish—" The words trailed into nothingness, for the ether had suddenly taken effect and the patient was unconscious. But Ann remained where she was as though frozen to the spot. What had he said? Had she really heard what she supposed? The man had said "Mitch"—had he been trying to say Mitchell? The "Boss," "Mitch." Could it be that Bruce was the person to whom he referred?

2

It was only by a strong effort of will that Ann was able to tear her thoughts away from those half-heard and disjointed words. Dr. Revell gave a curt order and Ann was at his side instantly, her respect for the doctor and his commands driving everything else from her mind. One could not indulge in idle speculation and daydreams at such a time. It was her duty to be at the doctor's side, ready to

hand him an instrument almost before he called for it, and the work required her undivided attention.

Ann had assisted at many operations before now and she knew her job so well that she was considered one of the best operating room nurses at the hospital. Though she was not aware of it, Dr. Revell had made a special request that she be assigned to him. The knowledge would have given her particular reason to be on the alert, but she was a good enough nurse to do her work well without such an impetus.

The patient's wounds were as ugly as any Ann had seen; shrapnel had torn away so much flesh and muscle that she wondered he was alive. His previous operations had been competently performed, but complications had developed which required reoperating, and delicate work of this kind was Dr. Revell's speciality. He worked with lightning rapidity, yet so carefully, so skillfully, that Ann realized more strongly than ever that she was seeing something that approached wizardry. She was so attentive to her duties, so well versed in them, that only three or four times did the doctor have to ask her for a specific instrument. At other times she had it in her hand, ready to give it to him before he asked for it.

It was two hours before the last stitch was taken and the wound rebandaged, but no one in the room had been conscious of the passage of time. Any operation is absorbing to those who take part in it, but this one had proved especially so in the light of the doctor's amazing skill. Ann turned away and pushed aside her mask as the patient was wheeled from the room. She wished she dared say something to Dr. Revell, dared tell him how she felt about the work he had just done; but she could not find words to express her feeling. She knew that the man had a chance now, that with luck he would live, and it was Dr. Revell who had made this possible.

"Good work, Miss Bartlett," said his voice from just be-

hind her. "You anticipated me almost every time. I like that."

Ann whirled about, her face scarlet with embarrassment. She had wondered whether she dared congratulate him, and here he was complimenting her on her little part in the operation. "I—I—" She hesitated and caught herself up abruptly. "Thank you, Dr. Revell. For you to say that after what you've just done seems almost absurd, but I am grateful." She added, smiling, "He really has a chance now." It occurred to her in a flash that, if the man were really to get well, she would be able to ask him what he had meant by his muttered reference to "Mitch." She could find out if her vague hope were justified, if he had been speaking of Bruce as the "Boss."

But she had no opportunity to consider this possibility now. There were other cases, and the rest of the morning passed in a steady round of work that left no time for her own thoughts. At lunch time she was so preoccupied that Sue, who sat beside her, could get her to say little of her morning's experiences. Sue was full of her new duty, its responsibilities and cares, and she did not greatly care that Ann was silent much of the time. It gave Sue an opportunity to relate all her own doings, and there was nothing she loved so much as an unlimited chance to tell someone everything that had happened to her in a given time. It did not greatly matter that her listener in this case was inattentive; Sue could listen to her own voice, and that had never been a trial to her.

"—and I wonder if he'll ever come out of it," chattered Sue happily. "He must have been your first case this morning, Ann, because he came in around eleven. Poor fellow, I never saw so much bandaging on any one person. He can't have any stomach left."

"Yon mean the abdominal Dr. Revell operated on?" Ann turned to Sue and spoke so urgently that Sue jumped. It was the first time Ann had shown any interest in the

story, and the way she asked the question might well have startled Sue. Now she saw that Ann was anxious for an answer to her question, and she frowned. Why should Ann care so particularly about one patient? One always was concerned for one's patients, but not as interested as Ann obviously was.

"Sue, do you mean that one?" demanded Ann. "Is he in your ward? I wish I'd known. Is he still unconscious? How is he?"

"Whoa!" cried Sue. "One at a time. No, he's still out, but he'll begin to come out of the anesthesia sometime this afternoon. Why are you so upset about him?"

Ann hesitated. "It's just that— Well, I'll tell you later. I may get a break this afternoon and be able to come up to see him. We haven't as heavy a schedule for the afternoon. I'll be up around four."

Ann was as good as her word. There were only two short operations after lunch and, when she had supervised clearing up after the second of these, she had a half hour's respite. Operational Ward Four was several floors above Ann's operating room, but she caught the elevator just before the door slid shut and saved herself several minutes of waiting. Sue was at her desk at the entrance to the ward when Ann appeared. She was busy with a long report sheet, but she stopped working on it immediately on seeing Ann.

"How do you like my territory?" asked Sue proudly. She waved one hand down the long ward as though the beds, patients, corpsmen, and nurses were all creations of her own. It was an impressive spectacle: the rows of orderly beds, the quiet activity of the nurses and corpsmen. There was an air of order, competence, and calm about the big ward that made Ann realize once again, as she had so many times during her years in the Navy, how excellently managed were all phases of the hospital life.

"Beautiful, Miss Justice, and all due to you no doubt,"

replied Ann. "All in one day you've made this ward what we see before us now."

"Oh, pooh. Don't you dare tease me about my lovely ward. I suppose it would run without me, but I like to feel I'm in charge."

"Has he come out of the anesthesia yet?" asked Ann, her voice losing its teasing note.

"I've got Billings, my star corpsman, standing watch over him. He's to let me know the minute he begins to— Yes, Billings?" Sue turned quickly to the corpsman who had approached her desk.

"He's beginning to come out of the anesthesia, Miss Justice. He's pretty restless."

"Bring me a quarter of morphine, please," ordered Sue, as she rose from the desk. "Come, Ann. I don't think he'll make much sense, and I don't know why you want to speak to speak to him, but we can see how he is."

Ann followed Sue to a bed halfway down the ward and paused for a moment to glance at the chart attached to the foot of the bed.

"Rathbone, Henry, AMM 2/c," she read aloud. "So he is an Aviation machinists mate. I wonder how he got wounded."

Sue, who was bending over the patient, said hurriedly, "I have his record sheet at my desk. You can— Come here, Ann. He's trying to say something. Perhaps you can tell what he means."

Ann leaned over the pillow and caught her breath. The man was terribly emaciated, his cheeks were so sunken and his skin so sallow that he reminded her of the men she had seen on Bataan in those last days before the peninsula had to be abandoned. His lips were moving and he seemed to be making a tremendous effort to say something. His eyes had been closed, but now they opened suddenly. She knew that he did not see her, that everything was merely a blinding haze of light to him.

"Bruce Mitchell," she said distinctly. "Lieutenant Bruce Mitchell."

"What in heaven's name are you saying?" demanded Sue. "What has he got to do with Bruce?"

"Shh!" Ann raised a warning hand as the man turned in the direction of the voice. He seemed to have heard her, and the words must have meant something to him, for his incoherent muttering ceased and his eyes blinked rapidly.

"Bruce Mitchell," repeated Ann.

The man gave a short gasp, moved his lips, and then said clearly, "He's the Boss. I fixed the plane all right when the Japs—" He stopped and Ann held her breath. For a long moment Rathbone said nothing, but the look of comprehension did not leave his eyes and she prayed that he would go on. "Those guerrillas need help. Mitch says—Up in the hills—Rain, rain, always rain—The Japs on Lu—Lu—I can't hang on—the water—plane—" His words trailed off into nothingness and he began rolling his head from side to side on the pillow as though in an agony of pain.

"The morphine," said Sue. She took the hypo from the corpsman beside her and injected the morphine into Rathbone's arm. "He mustn't get so restless. Billings, please stay by him and let me know the minute there is any change."

Ann followed Sue back to the desk, her mind in a whirl of confusion. Rathbone knew Bruce. He had been with him somewhere, probably as part of a ground crew, for he had said something about "fixing" his plane. The references to guerrillas, the hills, and rain were puzzling. He had tried to say something else, evidently a location, but he had not been able to get it out. With all her heart she wished that he had finished that one word before he became so restless that it had been necessary to inject the morphine. She knew that she should not have questioned him, that it was highly irregular to attempt to make a semi-

unconscious patient speak to her. But his reference in the operating room to "Mitch" had driven all caution from her, and her sole object was to get some clear statement from him that might tell her something about Bruce. She had not been very successful; everything Rathbone had said had only added to her confusion. She could make little of his references, and the only certainty was that he did know Bruce, that they had been together some place where there were Japs and guerrillas. But that might be anywhere, on any of the Pacific islands that remained in Japanese possession.

"Now just tell me what this is all about," demanded Sue, when they had reached her desk. "What does Bruce have to do with Rathbone? I couldn't make anything of what he said, and I don't like to have you questioning a patient in his condition."

"I know it, I shouldn't have done it," admitted Ann. "But I had to know." In a few words she told Sue what she had heard the man say in the operating room. "You see he does know Bruce, his name means something to him. But I don't understand the rest of it. I almost wish I had never heard him say Bruce's name. I don't really know any more than I did before, and I'm just that much more worried. Let me see his record."

Sue, whose eyes had grown big with excitement as Ann told her what she knew, drew a sheet of paper from beneath a pile on her desk and both girls bent over it eagerly. But it told them next to nothing. Rathbone had been unconscious when picked up on a raft "somewhere in the Pacific" by a destroyer and had been taken to a hospital in Pearl Harbor. The report sheet said nothing of the exact spot where he had been found. That was what Ann had been hoping to find, for it might have given a clue as to where he had been, on what island he had last seen Bruce.

"If he says anything more when he gets better, you'll try to make something out of it, won't you?" she begged. "I've

got to go back." She left the ward, even though Sue was obviously anxious to discuss the matter further.

Ann found it more difficult than before to concentrate on her duties in the operating room, and it was only by forcing all thought of Bruce from her mind that she was able to get through the rest of the afternoon. She was glad when five o'clock came and she was free to go to her room and give her undivided attention to those incomprehensible sentences and half-sentences Rathbone had uttered. They had whirled about in her mind so often that much of what he had said had become confused and forgotten. All she really remembered was that the man had recognized Bruce's name, that he had spoken of guerrillas and Japs. He had tried to mention a location, she felt certain he had, but she could not now remember the sound of the syllable. It was all so bewildering. If she had worried about Bruce before, she was even more anxious now.

Sue entered the room that they shared in the nurses' quarters shortly after, and together they tried to make something of those half-understood sentences. But Sue was more of a hindrance than a help; she had not been paying close attention to what Rathbone said, and her eager fancy painted such wild pictures and impossible speculations that Ann was soon reduced nearly to tears.

"For heaven's sake, Sue, stop! First you say Bruce is in China, then in Indo-China. It's silly for us to talk like this. I wish I'd never seen Rathbone."

"Well, you may never see him again," said Sue. "He's not doing as well as we hoped. When I turned over the duty to the night nurse, there were two doctors with him and they didn't seem to be very hopeful."

"You mean he's not expected to live!" Ann jumped to her feet, her concern showing only too plainly in her eyes. For a moment she struggled against a desire to rush up to the ward and see for herself how true Sue's report might be. She wanted Rathbone to live for his own sake, she told

herself, but deep in her heart was the very human wish that he might also live to tell her something more about Bruce.

Sue shook her head. "Dr. Revell did a wonderful job. It's not the fault of the operation, but Rathbone's general physical condition was so bad from exposure and starvation on that raft that there wasn't much of a chance for him."

Just before they went to bed that night, Sue telephoned up to her ward to inquire about Rathbone and found that her fears were justified. Rathbone had died only a few minutes before. It was a blow to both girls to hear the sad news, not only for the sake of what he might have told Ann, but because the death of any patient always affected them. The low percentage of deaths in the Navy hospitals was something all the staff took pride in, and the loss of a patient they had hoped to restore to health struck not only at their sympathy but at their record.

Now that Ann knew she would never hear more about Bruce from this source, she tried to forget that she had ever heard those incoherent words. The more she had thought of them, the more confused she had become, and she knew that they were affecting her badly. Her preoccupation with the problem had not helped her efficiency in her work, and this fact made her determined to forget the matter. As the days passed, the incident slowly faded from her mind and she could truthfully say that it worried her no longer. Of course she still thought of Bruce; he was always in her mind and heart, and her longing that she might hear from him and know he was safe never ceased.

She had put in for a transfer to the *Sea Haven* immediately after receiving Miss Hartwell's permission to do so, but nearly a month passed and she received no word of confirmation from the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington. Such matters were not decided in a moment, she knew, but the knowledge did not stop her from wishing that she had her transfer papers in her possession.

"Had a letter from Bob this morning," said Sue one evening just before dinner. "He seems more steamed up than ever about his job."

"Is he still with that same squadron on the carrier?" asked Ann. "That's where Bruce was the last I knew," she added. "On another carrier and another squadron of course, but he used to like his job and hoped to be squadron leader soon. But he's not with that carrier any more. I know, because the carrier came in to Mare Island."

"He would have got leave and been down here in nothing flat," said Sue. "I asked Bob once if he knew where Bruce was, but he just ignored my question and has never said a word about him. But there's one thing in this last letter that puzzles me. Look." She held out the letter to Ann, pointing to a postscript on the bottom of the sheet.

" 'I hope you read the newspaper,' " read Ann. " 'It improves the mind.' "

"I like that," exclaimed Sue. " 'Improves the mind!' He knows I read the papers all the time and listen to the radio news, too. He sounds pretty condescending, if you ask me."

But Ann was not listening. The postscript had given her an idea, and her eyes were alight with excitement. "He means that there's a big piece of news coming up, silly. Don't you see? Of course he can't say what it is, but I would bet anything it's a new invasion. What's the date?"

"October nineteenth, 1944," replied Sue promptly. "Well, it probably does mean that, but I wish Bob wouldn't worry about my mind. It doesn't bother me a bit."

"Well, you wait and see. Oh, I wonder where it will be. I always keep hoping that it will be the Philippines somewhere. Now that we have the Marianas, any one of the Philippine Islands seems the next step."

Ann's wish was granted. The next morning the papers carried the announcement of the Leyte invasion and, though everyone in the huge hospital could talk or think of

little else that day, there was no one so exalted by the news as Ann. Her experiences on the islands had given her a special interest in the return to them. The Philippines were to her not only a prime military objective, but their reoccupation had become a spiritual necessity. She had suffered too much, seen too much of the Japanese "Co-prosperity" there, to long for anything but their recapture from the Japs. Now the time had come; she knew the road ahead was long and hard, but she did not for a moment doubt that the liberation of the Philippines would one day be accomplished.

If she had been anxious before now to hear from Washington, the news of the Leyte invasion served to increase her feeling. She scanned the papers carefully, studying each word of the communiques from General MacArthur's headquarters on the beachhead. The first landings had proved wonderfully successful, but within a week the Japanese resistance had increased. She knew that hospital ships were beginning to take the wounded from the beachhead, and it was a constant aggravation that she was not aboard one of them.

"Want to hear something nice?" asked Sue one day nearly two weeks after the news of the invasion. She spoke in the teasing way that Ann had learned to recognize and guard against. If she should show too much interest in Sue's news, it would be some time before she heard what it was. So she merely shrugged her shoulders and turned away with pretended indifference. They had met outside the door of Ann's operating room, and Ann knew that Sue had taken the trouble to come there with a piece of news that would be vitally interesting to her.

Ann's ruse worked, for Sue exclaimed indignantly, "Well, look as though you didn't care then! I merely thought you'd like to know that the *Sea Haven* came into harbor here this afternoon; but if the news doesn't interest you, I'm sure it doesn't bother me."

3

BUT Ann had to wait still longer for the orders from Washington. It was aggravating to know that the *Sea Haven* was in harbor and that any day it might put out to sea once more. The fear that her orders would not come in time kept her in a constant state of nerves—so much so that Sue Justice finally declared that she would “be glad to get rid of her” so that she herself could “settle down” once more.

Meantime Ann learned that the *Sea Haven* had come from the Marianas and had brought wounded from there to Pearl Harbor. This trip to San Diego, the ship’s home port, was for the purpose of general repair and overhaul as well as to give its personnel an opportunity for leave in the United States. The *Sea Haven* had been two years in the Pacific, and many of her personnel had been stationed aboard her all that time. Now many of the nurses and corpsmen were due for a transfer, and it was this factor that had worked in Ann’s favor. She was certain that her request for duty aboard the hospital ship would be granted, but she felt that she would be happier about the situation with her orders in her hand.

The day after the orders arrived from Washington Ann packed or stored all her possessions and was soon ready to report for duty. The nurses serving aboard ship were allowed to carry with them a minimum of personal luggage, and it required skillful selection to decide just what one could do without. Fortunately Ann’s former duty aboard the hospital ship stood her in good stead, and she knew just which articles of clothing or personal convenience would be most necessary on shipboard. The rest of her things were sent to her aunt’s house in Kansas.

“I don’t see how you can decide so quickly,” said Sue, as she watched Ann toss aside a silk dressing gown in favor of

a more sturdy cotton one. "I would hate to divide up *my* things without thinking more about it than you do."

"Silk rots in the tropics—you know that," replied Ann. She snapped a large suitcase shut and then sat down on it with a sigh. "Well, that's done. I'm all ready. I've said good-by to Miss Hartwell and all the nurses and doctors. Now all I have to do is walk out the door, get a cab, and go down to the dock. I'm supposed to report aboard by six this evening." She stopped suddenly and looked at Sue. "We're always saying good-by, you and I. Don't look so sad or I'll cry, too. You know that's always the way in the Navy, and we ought to be used to it—but I never am," she added.

It was Sue who broke the gloom that threatened to engulf them. "I bet my nose and eyes are red, and I have to lecture a class of corpsmen on sickbed procedure in ten minutes! Ann, I've got to go. I won't really say good-by. We'll see each other again while the *Sea Haven* is in harbor. Good luck and write and—" Sue did not finish, but flung her arms about Ann, gave her a hasty hug, and the next moment had left the room.

Ann sat where she was for several minutes, smiling rather wistfully at the sound of Sue's quick retreating footsteps. She had not told Sue what she had learned only that morning: that the *Sea Haven* would put out to sea with the early morning tide and that there would be no opportunity to "see each other again." Good-bys were difficult enough; it was best to part with the hope of an early meeting. She took a last look about the neat little room then picked up her suitcase and went out the door, shutting it carefully behind her. How many doors had she shut behind her like this during her years in the Nurse Corps? How many phases of her life had she closed, knowing that each one marked a different era for her?

But Ann was not given to introspection. There was always something new, something to accomplish and work

for on the road ahead, and she looked forward to each milestone in her career with fresh vigor and eagerness. This tour of duty aboard the *Sea Haven* promised to be particularly rewarding and satisfactory. The ship in all probability would be serving in the Philippine area, and all that this return to the islands meant was bound up with the thought that she would be playing a part in their liberation.

The taxi left her at the gate leading to the dock, and Ann enlisted the aid of a corpsman who was going her way to carry her luggage.

"Are you stationed aboard, ma'am?" he asked, as they went through the long covered pier.

Ann nodded happily. "For the second time. I suppose you are, too. Oh, there she is!" She did not wait for the corpsman's answer, for they had emerged into the open section of the dock and saw looming above them the hospital ship, rising to what seemed a tremendous height above the pier.

In spite of the *Sea Haven's* years of service in the war zones, Ann saw immediately that the ship was as scrupulously clean and scrubbed as it had ever been. As soon as she was on the wide deck, looking about her with all the eager joy of meeting an old friend, she saw that its standards of order and cleanliness were as rigorous as ever. Sailors were swabbing down the deck, and all about was a subdued bustle and stir of activity that told the ship was preparing to leave the harbor.

Ann drew a long, happy breath. "Hello," she whispered softly. "Hello, *Sea Haven*."

But she had no opportunity to look about her now, even though she felt that she could spend hours inspecting each nook and cranny of the familiar ship. She knew she must report immediately to the chief nurse's office and be assigned a cabin in the nurses' quarters. Thanking the corpsman for his help, she picked up her suitcase and

turned to the hatchway that led to the lower deck. It seemed wonderfully familiar to be descending a ship's ladder once more, to sniff the odor of fresh paint, anti-septic, and all the delightful smells that characterized a floating hospital. She needed no directions to find her way to any section of the ship and went directly to the chief nurse's office. There were several nurses in the passageways she went along, though none of them were ones whom Ann knew. They all smiled at her, however, with that comradeship that is so great a part of the Nurse Corps. Ann thought that they looked like a particularly pleasant group and once more felt that she ought to pinch herself to make certain she was not dreaming of her good luck in being where she was.

But once inside the office, face to face with the chief nurse, Ann felt very wide-awake indeed. She wanted to make a good impression on her chief and knew that a first meeting was of tremendous importance. Lieutenant-Commander Rogers was a tall woman with a thin, almost emaciated-looking face. Her eyes were a light blue, so light that they seemed startlingly brilliant as she looked directly at Ann.

"Lieutenant Bartlett reporting for duty, Miss Rogers," said Ann. She felt somewhat disconcerted when Miss Rogers did not reply immediately, and particularly since those eyes never left her face. It was as though the chief nurse were looking to the very back of her mind and reading every thought that was there. But Ann did not flinch; she met that steely look as calmly as she could, though inwardly she was praying that those pale eyes would look somewhere else.

"Very good, Miss Bartlett." Suddenly Miss Rogers smiled and the effect was even more astonishing than the initial impression. The smile was wide and friendly, and it warmed her eyes and relaxed the somewhat stern lines of her face. "Sit down, please. I know why you asked to be

transferred to the *Sea Haven*, and I commend your feeling, though I hope you understand that duty anywhere in the Nurse Corps is of tremendous importance."

Before Ann could so much as open her mouth to reassure her, Miss Rogers continued, "We are glad to have you aboard. I see from your record sheet that you have served here before, so you know your way about. That will be a help to you." Miss Rogers had a brisk, decisive way of speaking that proved she knew exactly what she wanted to say and wished to waste little time in getting it said.

Ann realized this at once and was wise enough to make no unnecessary remark or comment in reply. She merely sat in unmoving silence and waited for her chief to give her her orders.

Miss Rogers glanced at her and gave an approving little nod. "As you know, we are to sail in the morning, so you must settle in your quarters as quickly as possible. You are to be on duty in the SOQ medical ward, and doubtless you know its location." Miss Rogers hesitated a moment and then once more smiled, that lightening smile that changed her personality so radically.

"You received your probationary training at Philadelphia under Miss Grantly, didn't you?" she asked surprisingly.

"Yes, in 1940," replied Ann, wondering why Miss Rogers should ask this.

But the chief nurse did not gratify her curiosity. She picked up a sheet of paper from her desk, glanced at it, and announced, "You will be in Cabin E. I suggest that you go there immediately to unpack."

Ann was outside the office a minute later, and it was not until she was halfway to the Nurses' quarters on a lower deck that she realized how little she had said during the interview. "Whew," she said aloud.

"Just come from Miss Rogers' office?" asked a voice be-

hind her. "I guess you feel that you've been whirled through the core of a tornado."

Ann turned to smile at the nurse who had come up behind her. She was a girl of about her own age with a round face and a pair of black eyes that seemed to be continually alight with laughter.

"Well, rather," confessed Ann, "but when she smiles you forget how much she scares you at first."

The other laughed. "She's wonderful and as nice as anyone could possibly be. All that sternness is just—just—" She waved airily to express what she meant and then abandoned the attempt. "My name's Nancy Clarke, and I know you're Ann Bartlett. You're last to report aboard, and we've all been dying to see you. You know you're practically a legend in the Nurse Corps. No one seems to have all the adventures you do, and we're hoping you'll lead us into some of them."

It was Ann's turn to laugh. "Adventures indeed. I just have an ability to get into trouble is the way I'd put it. Oh, don't try to carry that suitcase. I can manage it, thanks just the same."

Nancy Clarke pointed down a passageway to the left. "Cabin E is down there. You better hurry because there's a—"

"Nancy Clarke, you come here this minute," cried a voice from a near-by cabin. "I knew you'd never be able—" A hand reached out from the doorway and pulled Nancy unceremoniously backward into the cabin. Ann heard Nancy's protests, a sound of smothered laughter from several nurses who seemed to be collected in the cabin. Considerably mystified, she went on to her own cabin, feeling that her fellow nurses had some secret they were trying to keep from her.

Cabin E was halfway down the passage, and she knocked before opening the door. She knew she would have a room-

mate and wanted to announce her arrival in case the girl was inside. A clear voice cried, "Come in," and Ann pushed open the narrow door. Then in a flash she knew what it was the other nurses were making a mystery of and why Miss Rogers had asked about her probation period in Philadelphia. The nurse who stood in the center of the cabin, the girl with the dark curly hair and the snub-nosed, freckled face was Evelyn Baldwin, her first friend in the Nurse Corps. They had trained together in Philadelphia and had shared their first assignment to duty at the naval hospital in Parris Island. Ann stared at Evelyn, gave a little gasp of disbelief, and then found herself enveloped in a frantic hug.

"Evelyn, I—I can hardly believe my eyes," cried Ann at last, disentangling herself from Evelyn's embrace and holding her off at arm's length to look at her. "So that's what Miss Rogers—and all those girls—I knew something was—Oh, I'm not making sense. I never dreamed you were here. You haven't written in months and I thought you'd given me up."

"You make sense to me," retorted Evelyn cheerfully. "I put Miss Rogers and the others up to this surprise. Ann, you look wonderful. How long is it since we met? Almost three years, I guess."

"It is three years and much too long," exclaimed Ann. "But how did you happen to get here? I thought you were stationed in the Brooklyn Hospital—at least you were the last time you wrote."

Evelyn sat down on the edge of her bunk and surveyed Ann critically. "Still the same Ann Bartlett—full of questions and never waiting to hear the answers. We've got years to catch up on and lots of time to do it. Better get washed up; dinner's in a few minutes, and Miss Rogers is a bear for punctuality."

"Well, I can say 'still the same Evelyn; always practical,'" said Ann. "You always tried to keep me up to the

mark. I feel I'm living in a dream and have ever since I came aboard." She was washing her hands and tidying her hair as she spoke, for she was as anxious as Evelyn to be on time for dinner in the nurses' wardroom. Miss Rogers would preside at the head of the table, and Ann felt without being told that she liked the nurses to be on time.

"I felt the same way when I reported aboard and heard that you were stationed here, too. I'd been two years in Brooklyn and was due for a transfer, but it was beyond my wildest imaginings to think we'd be together. I remember how jealous I was when you got duty on the *Sea Haven* way back in 1941; now we're on a hospital ship together at last."

"And under a lot different circumstances than we were in those days," replied Ann soberly. "That life in the Nurse Corps in peacetime seems like another world."

Evelyn, who knew what Ann had experienced in the war years, and who had seen the tremendous changes those years had wrought among all her friends, merely nodded in reply. Both girls looked forward to being together, to sharing what lay ahead of them, but their joy in this comradeship was tempered by a comprehension of what their work among the wounded meant in human suffering. But these sobering thoughts must be kept hidden, for a great part of a nurse's duty lay in lifting the morale of the men in their care by preserving a cheerful, understanding attitude.

The other nurses were in the wardroom when Evelyn and Ann arrived there. They had already become acquainted, and Evelyn, who had been two days aboard, undertook to introduce Ann to her fellow nurses. There were twenty of them, the majority girls of Ann's age, for duty aboard a hospital ship is the most rigorous of any in the Nurse Corps and the younger nurses were generally chosen for it. At first her new comrades seemed only a mass of indistinguishable faces to Ann, but gradually, as dinner

progressed, she began to see them as individuals. They were one and all delighted to be aboard the *Sea Haven*, for such duty was highly prized, and their joy expressed itself in a continuous chatter. The talk was mainly concerned with past experiences, and it was this that helped Ann to distinguish each nurse as a separate personality. Before the meal was half over Ann felt that her new comrades promised to be as agreeable and interesting a group as one could wish to know. Miss Rogers sat at the head of the long table, saying little, but listening to the exchange of talk with such a sympathetic attitude that Ann wondered how she could ever have thought her stern and unbending.

Ann discovered that there was little necessity for her to tell her own experiences. All the nurses seemed to know her history and to envy her the unusual excitement that had characterized her career.

"It's just as I said," cried Nancy Clarke, who sat across the table from Ann. "We're all hoping you'll let us in on something exciting while we're aboard. Perhaps a Jap submarine will torpedo us and—"

"That will do, Nancy," exclaimed Miss Rogers. "You know that such talk is not allowed. Jap torpedoes indeed!" She spoke lightly, but Nancy knew that she meant what she said.

"I'm sorry, Miss Rogers," she said.

"You make me sound like a jinx," exclaimed Ann. She was embarrassed by the knowledge that the other nurses seemed to feel that her career was in any way extraordinary and wished that Nancy would not insist on discussing it.

"I hope that tomorrow will be fair," said Miss Rogers. "I always like a pleasant day to begin a voyage." It was a clear signal for a change of subject, and the nurses began an enthusiastic discussion of the weather. Ann sent Miss Rogers a grateful look and was rewarded with a smile of

understanding. She knows, thought Ann, that I hate to be thought different from the rest. I hope this trip will be as uneventful as a ride on the Staten Island Ferry.

Ann's wish appeared to be gratified in the week that followed. The day of their departure from San Diego was as clear and fair as Miss Rogers had hoped, and the weather continued to be the same for some time thereafter. There was little for the nurses to do during this outward journey, for there were no wounded aboard; they busied themselves then with getting acquainted with one another and their stations aboard ship and familiarizing themselves with their future duties there.

Ann's assignment to the Sick Officers' quarters was a responsible position, for she was to have charge of the medical section. Now that she had an opportunity to study the situation, she made good use of her time, for the long hours at sea gave her a chance to plan the best and most efficient disposal of her forces. There were ten corpsmen and one other nurse under her, and she trained them rigorously in the performance of their duties. This work was augmented by Miss Rogers' assigning her to instruct a group of corpsmen in operating room technique. The chief nurse was not a person who let time hang heavily on her subordinates, and each of the nurses was given a class of some sort to supplement the corpsmen's already thorough training.

It was a busy, pleasant period of time—the days that passed before the first faint shadows on the horizon showed that they would soon reach Hawaii. Aside from her work, Ann had had ample time to become acquainted with her fellow nurses and, more important to her, to catch up on all that had happened to Evelyn in their years apart. She had always liked Evelyn, who was a cheerful, eminently practical, down-to-earth person, and now that they were together again she realized how much their friendship meant to her. The other nurses took it for granted that

they were special friends and, though they all got along well as a group, Ann and Evelyn spent much of their time together.

"I hear we're to pick up a convoy after we leave Hawaii," said Evelyn on the evening that the mountains of Hawaii first appeared on the horizon. "We've been on our own so far. I suppose the Jap subs don't dare snoop around so near the mainland."

Ann laughed. "I wouldn't say we're lonely on this ocean. There hasn't been a day that we haven't seen a ship passing us headed either east or west. It makes me feel pretty comfortable to know there are so many of our ships around."

The two girls were on deck as the conversation took place. They had finished dinner and a free evening was before them. Ann leaned against the rail and stared at the horizon. "Hawaii," she murmured half to herself. "I wonder how much it has changed. When I was there before it was so lovely, almost unbelievably so, until—until that terrible day when the Japs—" She did not finish, but her lips tightened. "I'll never forget that, I couldn't," she added suddenly. "If the Japs had done nothing else, the destruction of that one day would be enough to make me despise and loathe them."

Evelyn glanced quickly at Ann and then said, "Bruce Mitchell was in Hawaii then, too, wasn't he?"

Ann had said very little about Bruce in the past week, and Evelyn, who knew they were engaged, had wondered about Ann's silence on a subject which must be very near her heart.

Ann did not reply immediately. Several times Evelyn had hinted at a confidence such as this, and each time Ann had avoided the opening. She was weary of the useless speculation about Bruce that had haunted her in the past months. She could not forget him, could never get him out of her thoughts, but she hated to go over the subject of his mysterious silence even with so old a friend as Evelyn. It

only upset her, made her restless and unhappy. If Evelyn knew that Ann had not heard from Bruce for so long, she would want to go over the whys and wherefors with endless questions and theories.

"Yes, he was," she said at last. "We had a wonderful time there. Hawaii was like a—a paradise in those days. I can't wait to get there again."

Evelyn realized that she had failed once more to elicit a confidence from Ann and wisely dropped the subject of Bruce. "I hate to tell you," she said, "but Miss Rogers told me that we're only stopping at Pearl Harbor for about twelve hours. *And*," she added gloomily, "not one nurse is to be allowed liberty ashore."

"Yes, I know," replied Ann. "I've been ready to weep about it all day. But Miss Rogers says we haven't any time to waste in getting to our station farther west. She wouldn't say where it was, but I'm hoping it's Leyte. I should think a hospital ship would be allowed to go in there by now. We've completely cleared the beachhead and got way over to the Omac region on the other side of the island."

"There's a bet on in the wardroom, and all the nurses have their money on Leyte," said Evelyn.

"Leyte? What's this about Leyte?" An officer, one of the doctors from the SOQ, had come up behind them and now joined them at the rail.

Ann laughed. "We were talking about our chances of putting in at the beachhead there. Any hope, do you think?"

The doctor did not reply immediately. His eyes were fixed on the horizon and he seemed to be looking beyond the mountainous outline of Hawaii into the Pacific beyond. "I heard an amazing story from one of the men to-day," he said suddenly. "Of course I'd heard rumors about the American Army and Navy men who have been helping the guerrillas in the Philippines, but we'd been told nothing definite about them and I'd put it down to scuttlebutt.

But this fellow says it's all true and our men have been with them ever since we lost the islands out there. It's extraordinary, the arms, food, and ammunition we've been able to smuggle in. Evidently Army and Navy flyers have been—"

"Navy flyers!" Ann was almost shouting. "You mean that Navy flyers have been landing in the Philippines to help the guerrillas?" In a revealing flash she remembered some of the mumbled words that Rathbone had spoken at the hospital in San Diego. It was as though they were written across the darkening sky in bright letters, and now their meaning was translated for her. Bruce, the guerrillas, the "Boss,"—Rathbone had "fixed a plane." It all made sense now. How could she have been so stupid? She, too, had heard stories of the aid given the Philippine guerrillas, but never in her wildest dreams had she supposed that pilots were getting planes in and out of the islands.

"Sure, that's what I mean," replied the doctor, staring at Ann in frank wonder at her outburst. "Why, does that mean anything in particular to you?"

"Yes," she said slowly, almost in a whisper. "Yes, it means a great deal."

4

THE *Sea Haven* was sailing north of the island of Hawaii when Ann went on deck before breakfast the next morning. The volcanic mountains of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa on this largest island of the Hawaiian archipelago were clearly visible, the peak of the former towering to an unbelievable height in the clear blue of the morning sky. To Ann, to sail this way once more was as though she were

coming home. Many times during the period she had been stationed here in 1941 she had passed through these same channels, gazed at this same panorama of soaring mountains, the lush green of the riotous vegetation that covered the tropical islands, and felt the soft warmth of the sunlit air against her face. Not even the sleepless night she had just passed could rob her of the joy of returning to these familiar scenes.

She did not go down to breakfast; there was too much to see, too much to remember, and she wanted to be alone for a time. There were few people on deck at this hour. She had the wide sea, the distant glimpses of mountains and lowlands, almost to herself. During the long hours of the night that chance remark of the doctor's had given her a great deal to think about. She felt certain now of what Bruce was doing and where he was. If her supposition were true, it would explain much of his silence in recent months. His work was of course secret, and it gave her an odd sort of comfort to have a reason for not hearing from him. She knew that what he was doing was highly dangerous, but her faith in his skill as a pilot and in his "luck" helped to minimize these dangers in her mind. She had resolved not to let this new knowledge of his whereabouts and activity get too strong a grip on her imagination. She, like so many thousands of other women, must live in hope that all would be well.

But the sight of these islands which she had seen for the first time when Bruce was also stationed at Pearl Harbor made it almost impossible not to compare the past with the present. She forced the unhappy contrast to the bottom of her mind and turned to look to the northwest of Hawaii where the island of Maui was coming into view. The ship channel lay north of this island and passed near Molokai, where the leper colony was. Once past Molokai, the channel turned south to Oahu, where Pearl Harbor and Honolulu were situated. It would take them until evening to

reach port at Pearl Harbor, and Ann looked forward to the day's sail with mixed joy and sadness. She wondered how much the war had changed the islands and whether the terrible scenes of devastation which had been her last view of Pearl Harbor and Honolulu had permanently destroyed the beauty of these places.

Evelyn came up from breakfast carrying a cup of coffee and a biscuit for Ann. She handed them to her without comment, for she knew without being told why Ann had forgone breakfast to remain on deck.

"Thanks, Evelyn. My, this coffee's boiling. Mmm, it's good though."

"It better be. I nearly burned my fingers to the bone getting it up here. Isn't this gorgeous! Why didn't anyone tell me that Hawaii was like this? I'd have broken my neck to get stationed here." She leaned on the rail beside Ann and rested her chin in her hands. "It's so peaceful you'd never think there was a war anywhere in the world."

"It wasn't peaceful on that December seventh," replied Ann briefly. "Look, there's Molokai! You can just see it coming into sight."

"Tell me the names of all these places," demanded Evelyn. "I was going to buy a map but I forgot it."

Until it was time for the girls to report for their day's duties, Ann gave Evelyn a rapid and somewhat incoherent lecture on the islands within view. Her enthusiasm was so great that she forgot Evelyn had no previous knowledge of what she was talking about, and so much of what she said was merely a jumble of names and descriptions to Evelyn, very few of them tallying one with another.

"Well," said Evelyn as they left the deck just before eight o'clock, "I suppose you know what you're talking about, but I must say I couldn't tell you whether Mauna Kea, or however you pronounce it, is a mountain or an island."

"It's a mountain, silly, and one of the highest in the

world. Lecture continued after lunch. See you later!" And Ann had disappeared at a run in the direction of the SOQ.

Though Ann had feared what she might see that evening when the ship anchored in the land-locked bay at Pearl Harbor, she discovered that her fears could be set at rest. There was little or no visible evidence of the Japanese attack. The harbor had been cleared of the wrecked shipping, the docks repaired, and the structures surrounding the bay rebuilt. Her first quick inspection seemed to show that everything was just as it had been, but soon she realized that the buildings were different and that a general air of newness pervaded the area. It was as though the entire district had grown up over night; and the atmosphere of leisurely ease, which had characterized everything about the islands in the days before the war, was gone. Now the feeling was one of alertness, of tremendous bustle and activity, both on shore and on the water. Ships of every description, from the newest and largest battleships to small tugboats, crowded the harbor. The drydocks, ship-repair shops, and warehouses that surrounded the bay were loud with the clamor of war work. The islands had indeed changed and, while Ann could regret the passing of the old way of life, she knew that this present scene expressed the spirit of American determination to win the war and win it as soon as possible.

By six the next morning the hospital ship weighed anchor and prepared to leave the bay. The nurses and corpsmen were instructed to follow the same routine, and they could look forward to doing this for at least two weeks. The chief difference in their life now was that they were part of a fleet of ships, most of them warships headed for the western Pacific. The *Sea Haven* was with the rearguard of the fleet, following behind the patterned distribution of ships that spread out over the sea ahead of them as far as the eye could see. The auxiliary ships, tankers, supply ships, and other nonfighting craft accompanied the hospital ship,

guarded by a swift-moving group of destroyers and destroyer escorts. The battleships and cruisers, with other larger units of the group, were ahead of them, moving majestically over the sea like mammoth giants of potential destruction. It was an impressive sight and one that Ann and Evelyn never grew tired of watching and marveling over.

"It looks just as though we were about to engage an enemy fleet," exclaimed Evelyn with a sigh of admiration. She and Ann were at their customary post on deck. It was just after lunch, and a broiling sun, which bore down from a cloudless sky, could not keep them from their favorite occupation—that of gazing about them at this evidence of American naval strength.

"It would, except for two things," replied Ann. "Number one is that we can't get the Jap fleet out to fight us now that we've given them such a licking in the Philippine Sea Battle, and number two is that hospital ships don't 'engage' in sea battles. They stay outside the action where they can take aboard the seriously wounded without endangering the ship."

"All right, spoil my fun," retorted Evelyn. "You always know all the facts, and my imagination never gets any exercise with you around." She was silent for a minute, evidently trying to figure out some numerical problem, for her fingers were moving in the way they always did when she was counting. "What was the date we left Pearl Harbor?" she demanded, evidently giving up the effort to solve the matter for herself. "I lose all track of time these days."

"Heavens, so do I. Let's see. I have it down in my diary. It was November twenty-sixth, I think. Yes, it was, because it was on a Sunday and Thanksgiving was the Thursday before."

"What a way to figure! All backwards. Anyway, it's December tenth now so we ought to be reaching Guam in a

couple of days. It takes about sixteen days from Hawaii to Guam. I can't believe we've been two weeks at sea, and do you know, we haven't so much as seen a bit of dry land in all that time. I never realized the Pacific was so bare."

"It's pretty big all right. We did catch a glimpse of Wake Island north of our route, you remember, but it wasn't anything but a blur on the ocean. You feel so out of things. All the news we get is from the ship's radio bulletin and that tells only the bare facts—about the Super-fortress bombings of Tokio from the Marianas and the Jap attempts to reinforce their troops at Ormac. I guess we've sunk an awful lot of their transports in the bay there, and—"

"Seen the latest?" Nancy Clarke joined them at the rail. She carried the familiar single sheet of paper which the radio room printed each day with a summary of the day's news. She pointed to the top of the sheet and both Ann and Evelyn leaned over her shoulder to read what was written there.

"'United States forces occupy Ormac after a five weeks seige.'" Ann read the headline aloud and then looked at Evelyn. "That means we've almost cleared the island," she exclaimed. "There are isolated Jap troops north of Ormac, but it won't take long to clear them out now. Evelyn, by the time we get to the Philippine area, I have a feeling our troops will be nearly ready to land on Luzon. We'll be in on that landing and—and—" But Ann could not go on. Memories of the suffering she had seen on Bataan and all that it meant to return there were too strong for expression.

Now that she knew how much progress had been made in freeing Leyte, Ann felt that it was all the more important that the hospital ship reach the fighting area quickly. She wanted to be a part of this great liberation, and each mile of the wide and empty ocean that separated her from the Philippines seemed to stretch endlessly before her.

It was fortunate that an increased pressure of duty kept her occupied at her post in the SOQ medical ward. Several officers had been brought aboard from other ships in the fleet, men who were the victims of an unromantic epidemic of jaundice that had broken out just after they had left Guam. Many of the patients had been sent to the *Sea Haven* where they could be kept in an isolation ward, and Ann was busy in caring for them. The hospital ship was now headed for the Philippine area; it was prepared to enact the role it had come these thousands of miles to perform—that of a floating hospital, perfectly equipped and manned in every respect to offer refuge to the wounded.

Guam had been a disappointment to Ann, chiefly because she saw practically nothing of the island. The *Sea Haven* had reached there on the evening of the fourteenth and had put out to sea the following day at dawn. She had a vivid impression of what seemed to be thousands of ships crowding a harbor and of a very green stretch of land beyond, every inch of which appeared to be in use either as a landing field for the planes which were constantly coming and going or as the site of a building.

It was a relief to be at sea once more and to know that every hour brought them nearer to their destination. None of the nurses had any certain information as to what part of the Philippine area the ship would be sent, but when news of the landing at Mindoro reached them on the evening of their leaving Guam, the speculation and conversation on the subject reached a new high.

"We'll be somewhere west of the islands now that we've landed on Mindoro, I should think," said Ann. There were several nurses in the lounge, and most of them were quite willing to listen to what she had to say about their possible sphere of action. She was the only one of the nurses, with the exception of Miss Rogers, who had been in the Philippines before, and her opinion had all the weight of previous experience. The *Sea Haven* was five days out of

Guam and once more sailing an ocean that was barren of any sight of dry land.

"But there are lots of islands on the west side that we haven't taken," objected Evelyn, who had been studying a map assiduously and had a photographic impression of the islands firmly fixed in her mind. "The communique said that the fleet had sailed by several Jap-occupied islands in approaching Mindoro and was strafed by enemy planes. I don't want any strafing going around over my head."

"Well, the Sulu Sea is bigger than it looks on the map," replied Ann. "There's lots of room for the *Sea Haven* there. If we stood off Leyte we'd be pretty far from the main field of action now."

Miss Rogers smiled at the eager discussion taking place around her. She knew where the ship was to operate and the nurses realized that she knew, but nothing would have induced any of them to question her on the subject. Meantime she allowed the discussion to continue unchecked and preserved an appearance of interest in everything that was said—an attitude that was little short of remarkable in the light of her own knowledge.

At noon the next day a gray blur appeared on the horizon, a long mass of indistinct outline that might have been a cloud formation or an island. By sunset the nurses did not have to be told that this darkening line in the west was their first sight of land in almost a week. The outline was clearer and a faint tinge of green lightened the land mass and gave promise of the tropic vegetation that covered the islands. The land directly ahead of them seemed to be almost uniformly flat, scarcely rising above the water line, but farther south a towering mountain peak broke into the sky like a gigantic cone of rock.

"That must be Mt. Urdaneta," announced Evelyn. "Six thousand two hundred and fourteen feet high. It's right on the north end of Mindanao, and those islands north of it must be Samar and Leyte."

"You and your map," groaned Nancy. "Six thousand feet indeed. Who cares? I'd rather look at Leyte any day. Wouldn't you know it would be night when we really get near enough to see anything?"

But in the morning they discovered that they were to be granted ample opportunity to see all they wished of the nearing islands. The *Sea Haven* had fallen farther behind the fleet during the night and, when daylight came, most of the other ships had disappeared, leaving them under escort of three or four destroyers. The hospital ship was lying in a narrow strait almost completely surrounded by land. The nurses had been up long before breakfast to hang over the rail and exclaim and speculate over their possible whereabouts. The island immediately south of them was small enough to distinguish its length and breadth, but to the north was a large mass of low-lying land covered with palms and with a narrow white beach skirting its edge.

Miss Rogers did not leave them long in doubt as to the reason for being where they were or the location of their anchorage. As soon as the nurses had collected in the ward-room for breakfast she gave the answer to the question that each pair of eyes turned in her direction was asking.

"We have stopped here to take on a group of seriously wounded men from the Mindoro area," she began. "A transport is bringing them through the strait sometime this morning and we have been ordered to stand by to take them aboard. As no doubt some of you have guessed, the island just north of us is Leyte and—"

"Leytel" The word burst from several of the girls in one breath. Was it possible that the green and peaceful stretch of beach they had been gazing at only a short time before was the island that had been fought over for so many weary weeks? It looked completely untouched by the scars of battle and entirely deserted.

Miss Rogers smiled. "The southern half of Leyte was

not part of the battlefield, you remember. Ormac and our initial beachhead on the island are to the north."

"Are we going to stay in this area permanently?" asked Nancy. She was asking a question that all her friends were longing to ask but that only the impulsive Nancy dared put into words. It did not seem possible that the *Sea Haven* would stay so far from the active area, and they all knew that the main battle had moved into the Sulu Sea to the west.

It was a surprise to all of them when Miss Rogers replied to the question. "No," she said quietly, "we are to be here only long enough to pick up this first group of wounded. We will continue on through the strait this afternoon." She said no more, but they all knew that once through the Surigao Strait the *Sea Haven* would join other units of the fleet in the Sulu Sea.

The troop transport, a large, nearly flat-bottomed craft which carried troops for landing attacks and brought out the wounded on its return trip, came alongside the *Sea Haven* just before noon. The sea was calm in this land-locked strait, and the transport was able to get near enough to swing the Stoke stretchers from its deck to that of the hospital ship by using the booms attached near the rail. Only the most seriously wounded, those needing immediate hospital treatment, were brought aboard. The others were taken care of in the sick bay aboard the transport and would be transported to a shore hospital on Guam.

The nurses played no part in this transfer of patients. The well-trained corpsmen had charge of this phase of the ship's duty, and the nurses were at their stations in the wards or operating rooms ready to superintend the patients' care as soon as they were brought down from the deck on the stretchers. Ann was at her post in the SOQ medical ward with everything in readiness to receive her contingent of patients. She could expect that most of them would be suffering from the tropical diseases, malaria,

dengue, and the other fevers that would be taken care of in a medical ward. When the first stretcher appeared in the ward, borne by two corpsmen, she was there to receive it and direct the patient's removal to a bed. All of her patients were officers and, as she had known, the majority were victims of acute tropical fevers. She had had experience before with the suffering such diseases brought and knew that, while most of the cases were curable, many of them would have recurring bouts of the same malady in the future. The patients brought aboard from the transport were those requiring immediate hospitalization, men who could not stand the week-long voyage to Guam in the transport.

The doctor in charge of the ward was at hand to prescribe for the treatment of each patient, and it was Ann's duty to see that his orders were carried out through the corpsmen under her charge. There were ten officers taken aboard from the transport, and it was evening before Ann had seen that each was made as comfortable as possible and that all had been given the initial medicines and treatment required. She was so preoccupied in this her first real call to action since being aboard the hospital ship that she had no opportunity to go on deck during that day. It was only at five o'clock when she was preparing to go off duty that she paused long enough to catch her breath. Then she sat down at her desk at the end of the ward to check the patients' report sheets so that she could give a clear account of each man's status to the night nurse.

She leaned her head on her hands for a moment to steady her thoughts for the task. Suddenly she jerked upright with an exclamation. The faint but unmistakable thump of the engines deep down within the ship told her that the *Sea Haven* was under way once more and that even now it was threading the narrow channel of the Surigao Strait. They were on their way, and by morning she knew that the hospital ship would be well out into the Sulu Sea within sight

of those islands which were still occupied by the enemy. It did not frighten her that they were approaching Japanese-held territory. Even the Japs had not attacked the well-marked hospital ships, but it gave her a feeling of exultation to know that an American naval vessel could penetrate so deeply among the islands that for so many years had been held in the grip of the enemy.

Ann was tired when she went on deck that evening, tired but deeply content that her work had begun, that the duty she had been sent to perform was at last a reality. It was a brilliantly clear evening. A host of stars shone like a spread banner of twinkling light above her, reflecting in the mirror of the calm sea. Dark patches of land, unrelieved by any sign of habitation, were visible to the north and south, but Ann could only guess as to their identity. Off to their port and starboard side were the dark outlines of the destroyers that were escorting them through the channel. The *Sea Haven* was lighted to mark it as a hospital ship, and the glow of its lights dimmed the radiance of the stars within their radius. The evening was deeply quiet, except for the dim thud of the engines, and Ann leaned against the railing to absorb the unearthly beauty of the scene.

She was so lost in a waking dream that the sudden blast of sound from a destroyer far in the lead of the *Sea Haven* seemed like a pistol shot off at her ear. She whirled about in time to see the streak of red that followed the path of the anti-aircraft shell. Instantly the guns from the other destroyers burst into action, sending trails of fire across the sky and shattering the peace of the night with the ear-splitting din of their bombardment.

"What is it?" The voice was shrieking in her ear and Ann felt her arm gripped with fear-tightened fingers.

Ann did not have to answer Evelyn's question. Suddenly a new sound broke through the crashing guns. It was the hum of a plane, coming nearer and louder over their heads, until its motors became a screaming crescendo of noise.

Both girls looked up, their heads jerked back like those of puppets on strings. The plane, a dark and deadly blot across the sky, was bearing down directly upon them. Ann had seen that outline before; she did not have to be told that this was a Jap dive bomber. Before she was fully conscious that Evelyn had begun to scream, to crouch down upon the deck, another plane swept into view from the north, coming at such a rate of speed that it seemed like a long streak against the sky. The Jap pilot must have seen the American plane before Ann was conscious of it. It executed a complete turn directly in the path of the oncoming plane, its guns sending a burst of fire toward its assailant. But it was too late; a simultaneous outburst from the forward guns of the American plane caught the Jap aircraft, and a second later a flaming blaze of fire falling in a slow curve to the sea was all that remained of the enemy plane.

"They got it, they got it!" Ann scarcely recognized her own shrieking voice. She grabbed Evelyn's hand and hauled her to her feet to witness this triumphant victory, but a moment later her cry of joy had frozen on her lips.

The American plane had also received a mortal blow. It was turning awkwardly, making a vain attempt to maintain altitude. Suddenly it dived, heading straight for the sea directly in the path of one of the destroyers.

5

THOUGH it was only a matter of seconds between the time the American plane received its death blow and the moment it hit the water just before the bow of the fast-moving destroyer, it seemed to Ann that the scene was taking place

in a slow-motion movie performance. The fatal downward plunge of the plane, completely out of control, and the desperate turn to starboard which the destroyer took to avoid the crash, were photographed in her mind as though the entire action were completely static. She was unconscious that she still held Evelyn's hand until she felt her arm jerked backward with a wrench that restored her to a sense of reality. All that had taken place before her eyes had really happened; it wasn't just a nightmare.

"That—that plane! It crashed right into that ship!" Evelyn's voice in her ear had risen to a shriek that in the silence following the gunfire rang across the starlit waters of the strait.

For one frantic moment Ann wondered what she should do, how she could report what she had seen to the bridge. Then sanity returned, even before the *Sea Haven* swung off course and turned to starboard to make for the scene of the accident. Of course the men on watch had seen what had happened and had acted instantly. There was nothing that she could do but pray that what seemed inevitable had not happened; that the pilot and crew of the American plane were not dead but had somehow miraculously escaped what must be their almost certain fate. The destroyer's speed had been too great to avoid the collision. The plane had plunged into the sea just under its bow and and the ship had been forced to override it. Now there was no sign either of the plane or the men who had been in it. Had the men been able to get out in time, to extricate themselves from the wrecked plane? There was no way of knowing now, and the smooth and silent sea gave no reply to the agonizing question.

The deck was suddenly alive with members of the crew and staff, for word of what had taken place had spread through the hospital ship. A boat was swung out on its davits, ready to be lowered the moment the *Sea Haven* came near enough to the scene of the accident to stand by.

The other destroyers in the escorting force were also drawing near, closing around in a protective screen, prepared to take whatever action was necessary to effect a rescue.

"How can they be alive?" Ann's lips formed the words, but she made no sound. It seemed utterly impossible that any man could live after that headlong plunge into the sea. The ship had ran right over the wreckage of the plane; there could be no doubt of that, for Ann had seen the prow cut straight across the up-tilted wing of the plane.

The *Sea Haven* had been less than a quarter of a mile from the scene, but it seemed an endless period of time before she hove to within shouting distance of the destroyer. The latter had cut down to quarter speed and now was barely making headway. One of the escorting destroyers had run back behind the *Sea Haven*, and a long beam from one of its searchlights cut across the black water, sweeping the area for any sign of survivors. The eyes of everyone aboard the *Sea Haven* followed the path of light, and it was obvious from the tense silence that the same anxious thought was in each of the watchers' minds. Would there be any sign on that dark, smooth expanse of water, any darker spot to show that a man was alive out there and fighting for his life?

"They couldn't—no one could live after—the destroyer's screws would have—" Evelyn was not talking to anyone. Her incoherent, half-whispered words could be heard by no one but Ann, and they were an echo of her own fears—so much so that she wondered if it were not her voice that was muttering these unfinished sentences. Her eyes ached with staring at the flat blackness of the sea, empty of anything that could possibly be taken for a man's head above the water.

"They aren't alive, it's no use," she said dully, when several minutes of fruitless searching had passed. "They must—*Look!*" The word was a shout of triumph. Once

more she gripped Evelyn in a frantic clutch and with the other hand pointed out over the sea.

The searchlight had wavered over a certain spot, shot away and come back to rest on a section of the water that showed the darker blot each watcher had longed to see. Instantly the boat was lowered from the deck of the *Sea Haven*, and the four men who made up its crew were making their way toward that small dark object. Another lifeboat put out from the destroyer whose searchlight had found the man.

"How many were aboard the plane?" Evelyn was making an effort to speak in a normal tone, but her voice betrayed her shaken nerves.

"I don't know, I couldn't see what kind of plane it was." Ann left their post near the forward end of the deck as she spoke and, almost unconscious of where she went, made her way toward the ladder in mid-deck where the lifeboat would return. She could not say what drew her there, but deep within her was an urge to be near when the lifeboat came back, to see with her own eyes whether or not that distant shape on the ocean was in reality a living man, someone miraculously saved from what had seemed a certain death.

She pressed through the group of anxious watchers along the rail until she stood with both hands gripping the high bar of steel. The ladder was just beside her, and up those narrow steps the survivor would be carried. Now that the tension had relaxed with the knowledge that some definite action had taken place to effect a rescue, the men and a scattering of nurses near by all seemed to be talking at once, arguing, hoping, speculating over this one survivor and the possibility of finding the others. They could see very little of what was actually taking place where the survivor had been seen, even though the searchlight still played a beam over the spot. Several small boats

from other destroyers were headed for the same area, making wide sweeps in the hope of finding the rest of the plane's crew.

The Japanese plane had completely disappeared from Ann's thoughts. It was not until she heard a man beside her say, "—and there wasn't a sign of it left. Burnt out, crew and all. Serves the little monkeys right," that she remembered it. No one could live through that holocaust, pilot and crew had sunk beneath the water, caught in the burning plane. Ann could not find it in her heart to feel sorry, even to think of them at all.

The beam from the searchlight made the rest of the area darker in contrast, and it was impossible to see anything outside its path. Therefore it came as a surprise to Ann to see the *Sea Haven's* lifeboat emerge from the shadows into the aura of light that surrounded the hospital ship. The small boat seemed to have risen from the sea, so suddenly did it appear just within her range of vision. A simultaneous exclamation that sounded like a gigantic sigh greeted the boat's appearance, and everyone pressed forward against the crowded rail. Ann was thrust to the very top of the ladder and clung there unconscious of the fact that another step would push her overside. She watched the slow approach of the little rescue boat, trying to make out whether the huddled shape within it was one man or two.

"Clear the rail!" A stentorian voice from the rear of the group shouted the order and was instantly obeyed. The crowd broke, leaving a cleared area about the ladder. Ann stepped back along the rail, still watching the scene below with painful intensity. Two corpsmen descended the ladder to assist the rescued man or men aboard. Ann saw them bend down and lift what looked like a sodden heap of clothing. Then the figure moved, tried to kneel, and a pair of arms stretched out to grip at some support. The corpsmen took the man's arms and lifted him quickly to

his feet and up the ladder, half-dragging, half-pushing him. Another limp figure remained in the boat. There had been two men saved. Another was lying motionless down there, waiting to be taken aboard.

Others had seen the same evidence of a double rescue, and a renewed sense of exultation swept over the watchers. Ann felt the same thrill of joy, but she was too intent on watching the men on the ladder to express the feeling in words. Unconsciously she had stepped forward once more and, as the corpsmen lifted their burden on the deck, she was directly beside them. She got a swift impression of a drawn and haggard face, almost inhuman in its evidence of something that was more than fear and horror. His eyes expressed it most in seeing nothing, showing no sign of realization of where he was or how he had got there. She reached forward and took the man's arm as the corpsmen relinquished their hold to return for the other man. Her firm grip must have awakened some awareness within him, for he turned suddenly and stared into her face with eyes that seemed to be searching for some assurance of reality.

"You're all right. You're safe aboard ship." Ann's voice was a level monotone. "You're all right, you're all right now." She smiled.

Then to her horror the man's face lost its look of stark rigidity; he knew, he remembered all that had happened. His eyes widened as he stared at her and his lips moved, writhing in an effort to speak. "Th-thank you, thank you, thank you," he repeated over and over again, half sobbing, half laughing. "Thank you—the lifebelt caught and—the screws—right over—the water—" His arms reached out to cling to her and it took all her strength to keep him from falling.

It had seemed an eternity to Ann, this moment when she stood beside the rescued man supporting him and listening to his pathetic gratitude. A stretcher was already at

hand and corpsmen standing by caught the man before he fell and laid him upon it. Ann thought he had fainted, but as the corpsmen lifted the stretcher, he sat up and tried to stand.

"The pilot, Jim's, out there. I saw him, he got past the screws. I saw him, he was near me. You've got to find him."

"We'll find him, he'll be all right." Ann was once more speaking in the same monotonous soothing tone. It seemed to have a reassuring effect on the man. He hesitated, then looked up at Ann.

"You've got to get him. Jim's one of the best—" Suddenly he sank back on the stretcher and this time Ann knew he had lost consciousness.

The second man had been brought aboard when she turned toward the ladder once more. The first had not been physically injured by his terrible experience, but this man had evidently been caught by the destroyer's screws. His arm was a mangled mass of torn flesh and he made no movement that showed he was alive. He was carried off on another stretcher to the operating room, almost before Ann had so much as caught a glimpse of him. Both men were already being cared for below deck, long before the image of them faded from the forefront of Ann's thoughts. She turned to the rail once more, still numbed by the memory of the first man's look and words. The shock of his long submergence under water, of having been run down by the destroyer with the horror of the screws sounding in his ears, had very nearly destroyed his reason.

She leaned against the rail, fighting to recover from the sound of the man's frantic, incoherent words ringing in her ears. For a moment she paid no attention to what went on about her; then, with a shock of horror, she realized that the searchlight had been switched off and that the *Sea Haven* had swung to port once more to continue on its course.

"The pilot, the pilot," she cried. "He's out there, one of the men said so."

"What was that!" A quick voice brought her back to her senses. She turned to the officer beside her and in a calmer voice related what the man had told her.

"He said he saw him after the destroyer ran over them," she insisted. "He seemed certain of it."

The officer was gone almost before she finished speaking, and a minute later Ann saw a series of flashes from the signal tower. The destroyers, which had deployed to their stations, answered and a moment later the searchlight flashed on again.

"We thought there were only two," exclaimed the deck officer when he returned to the rail. "The plane was reported as a two-man fighter-bomber, but one of the men we picked up must have been a reconnaissance man or something."

"He seemed to know," replied Ann. "He must have known who was picked up with him." She strained her eyes to stare out over the black, unruffled surface of the water. It was utterly calm, but a calm that held no sense of peace now. It was menacing in its oily smoothness. Somewhere on or beneath that dark stretch of water was a man, a man who was perhaps fighting for his life, seeing the lights of the ships and trying to signal or shout to show his whereabouts.

It was Ann who saw him first, saw the dark unmistakable break in the path of the searchlight that must be what they were looking for. But even as she opened her mouth to shout, a cry went up from along the rail. Others had seen him too. Once again the lifeboat went overside, and once again Ann watched with the others in strained silence as the man was brought aboard. But this time the limp figure that was carried up the ladder held no breath of life. She knew, as she saw him stretched upon the deck, saw the great gash in his forehead, that Jim, the pilot, was dead.

She turned away, sick at heart. They had found Jim; the other men of his crew would be told that he had been taken from the sea, but that their pilot was dead.

The image of that limp figure remained with her all night. She could not talk of it with Evelyn, who had not seen the first man's face closely or heard him as he spoke of his pilot. She went down to the operational ward the next morning before going on duty. The man who had clung to her, who had thanked her for saving him, was sitting beside his comrade's bed. The latter had been operated upon and Ann had heard he had an excellent chance for recovery. The two men were not talking to each other. They sat in complete silence, a silence that was almost unbearable in the intensity of its feeling.

Ann realized instantly that they had been told of Jim's fate. She said nothing, knowing there was nothing to say. The man on the bed looked up at her blankly and then turned his head away. The other rose to his feet. He was a tall man, a tremendous hulking figure as he stood there looking down at Ann. She knew he wanted to say something, to explain his words of the previous evening. Suddenly she knew that he was ashamed of his emotional outburst and the knowledge terrified her. Suppose he should try to apologize, to explain away that revealing, human moment of fear and suffering. A man who had been through so much had every right to feel as he had felt.

"I guess I—" he began. His lips tightened. "I talked last night when I came aboard." He was in an agony of embarrassment.

"Talked?" Ann looked puzzled. "You didn't say a word."

The relief that swept over his face was almost more unbearable than his original distress. He grinned.

"You're coming along fine," she said, turning to the other man. "I'm certainly glad we were so near at hand last night."

"We were lucky—luckier than—" The man on the bed did not finish. It was the only reference made to Jim.

Ann could not get the memory of their faces out of her mind all that day. She attended the burial service for the pilot, standing where she could not see the one member of his crew who could be there to pay this last tribute to his chief. The words of the brief, impressive service rang in her ears—"and so we commit the body of this Thy servant—" The flag-draped coffin on deck, the quiet, intent faces of the men standing near by— To be buried at sea, a sailor's last resting place— But this man had been a pilot, a man whose space had been the skies. Ann never forgot that ceremony.

Two days later the *Sea Haven* was in the Sulu Sea, headed on a slow northward course. This was their station, to stand well out at sea in the rear of the battle area, ready to take aboard those wounded which the transports or other warships brought to be cared for in this gigantic floating hospital. Ann and the other nurses tried to make out from the configuration of the distant islands just where they were each day, but the shorelines were so far away it was difficult to distinguish the various islands. They knew they were surrounded by territory that was still held by the Japs—Panay, Palawan, and other smaller islands; but this nearness of the enemy held no fears for them. The hospital ship was well-marked and lighted at night and therefore was inviolate.

A Christmas party was given aboard ship by the nurses, who did everything in their power to make the occasion festive. The wards were decorated with festoons of ribbon and paper streamers, and gifts which the girls had prepared were given to each of the patients. The men responded with a will and each one attempted to add something to the spirit of the occasion. They kept up the note of cheer until the carol singing on deck on Christmas Eve. As Ann stood in the open air with the members of the staff

and crew and those patients who could be brought on deck to join in the singing, she felt her throat tighten. The air was warm with a soft touch of dampness that promised rain. Far above them was the vast blue arc of a spangled sky. Other Christmases, the thought of snow, of cold, clear air, and sleigh bells swept across her mind. But she must not think of such things now. This was Christmas, too, no matter how far from home, how incongruous the surroundings. She smiled suddenly as the first notes of "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem" came from the ship's organ. No matter where one sang this hymn, under whatever circumstances, it was lovely and held all the joy of Christmas.

"I think everything went well," she said to Evelyn, as they were preparing for bed that night. "The wards really looked very gay."

"Thanks to you," replied Evelyn. "You thought of using that blue paper from the supply room to make the festoons. Your face must ache with smiles. I never saw you stop all day."

Ann did not reply for a moment. "I remembered another Christmas out here," she said suddenly. "It was when the Japs were bombing Manila. When I remembered that I had reason to smile. You know, it's odd and I wonder if you noticed the same thing. No one said 'Merry Christmas' to anyone. I couldn't when I was in the wards with the men. Somehow I—well I couldn't say it. I just wished them luck."

Evelyn nodded. "I couldn't either; somehow I never thought of saying it. I just wanted to make things as gay as possible for everyone, but 'Merry Christmas'—no I couldn't say it either."

Two transports brought wounded aboard in the next two days, and Ann was too busy with her duties to remember what season of the year it was. There was a constant coming and going in the ward under her care. As the

patients recovered and were sent to convalescent wards, new ones appeared to take their place.

Life on the *Sea Haven* was a constant round of activity and responsibility, work that Ann was glad to have the opportunity of doing. It kept her hands and mind occupied and the nagging, torturing thoughts of Bruce could be buried beneath the routine of her duties. For as the ship penetrated farther north she felt that each turn of the screws brought him nearer to her. She had no certain knowledge of him, no idea on which of the many islands in the Philippine archipelago he might be situated. But she knew that he was in the area; the combination of circumstances, the half-uttered words Rathbone had spoken, and the doctor's mention of the aid given by Army and Navy pilots to the guerrillas told her this. She had an unspoken, scarcely conscious belief that she would see him sometime in the days that lay ahead.

"Now where are we?" asked Evelyn one noontime, as she and Ann sat in the enclosed deck area reserved for the nurses. It was just after lunch and both girls had a free afternoon before them. They had planned a full schedule of activity for this time-off, a schedule which included washing some of the personal laundry that had accumulated in their laundry bags. But going below deck into the washrooms seemed utterly impossible when the sun shone so warmly overhead and the deck chairs were so comfortable.

Ann shaded her eyes from the sun and tried to make the vague shape of land on the portside look familiar. There seemed to be two or three separate islands, but there was a haze over the water and she knew that it made everything seem out of proportion.

"Don't ask me," she said at last. "I thought those islands were the northeast end of Palawan, but now—" She stopped and got up from her deck chair to look off to star-

board. There was a larger land mass in this direction, and Ann made a rapid mental calculation from her memory of the map of the area. "Good heavens," she exclaimed, "I'd no idea we'd come so far north. That's Mindoro over there. It must be. It's the only big island around here."

"You mean where we're fighting now?" Evelyn stood up to look, but the distant shoreline showed nothing that could distinguish it as a battle area. It looked remote and peaceful in the dazzling noonday sun. Between them and the island, however, were several warships and a number of transports that were coming and going between Mindoro and the islands farther south. A few reconnaissance planes sailed lazily overhead, but they had the skies to themselves and there was no sign of the enemy either in the air or on the sea. The sea had every appearance of tranquillity, but far in the distance, out of sight, they could hear the dull roar of bursting shells and bombs. Though they could not see it, they knew that the battle of the Philippines was still going on somewhere north of them.

"I guess Mindoro is pretty well secured, at least the airfields," replied Ann. "We've begun bombing the airfields on Luzon now and the Japs haven't done much to try to stop us. I heard that they sent over a force of interceptor planes yesterday, but they couldn't do much against all our planes. I wish we were farther north where we could see some of this."

"We're far enough to suit me," declared Evelyn. "That noise of the bombardment makes me nervous, even though I know we are the ones who are causing it."

"Well," said Ann a few minutes later, jumping to her feet with an air of determination, "we aren't getting anything done here. Come on. The laundry waits!"

Evelyn followed her down to their cabin and they spent an industrious afternoon doing many little odd jobs of washing and mending that never seemed to get done ex-

cept on these occasional afternoons off. Since they were below deck, they did not know that a heavy fog had swept over the sea during the late afternoon, a fog so dense that it was impossible to distinguish objects more than fifty feet from the ship's rail. The *Sea Haven* slowed to half, then quarter speed until it was barely making headway. The deep mournful note of the foghorns was what first warned them of the change in the weather. By dinnertime a wind had come up from a southeasterly direction, bringing with it a heavy sea. The hospital ship began to roll and pitch with an ever-increasing violence.

"I don't think I'll go down to dinner," said Evelyn. She was lying on her bunk looking somewhat green, though trying to pretend that it was not the motion of the ship that decided her to forego dinner.

Ann had felt seasick herself during her first duty on the *Sea Haven* and knew it was no joking matter. She felt no effects of the motion now, but was understanding enough not to tease Evelyn.

"I won't either," she replied. "We have some biscuits here and fruit. I'm going to wash my hair and then we'll have a picnic supper." She had put on a pair of white slacks and a shirt to do her afternoon chores and looked very much like a slender boy as she collected her towels and soap. "Be right back," she called over her shoulder as she went out the door.

It took her only a little while to wash her short-cropped head. Her dark hair was naturally curly and, giving it a vigorous rub, she wrapped the towel around her head turkish fashion. As she came out of the washroom the ship began rolling more heavily than before, and she decided to run up on deck to see whether or not they were in for a real storm. She met no one as she ran along the corridor and up the ladder to the top deck. Once here, she gave a choking gasp of amazement. It was as though she had emerged into a steam bath. The fog rolled over the deck,

obscuring the ship's lights until they were little more than dim diffusions of orange color. It was a fog that got into her lungs and seemed to press down upon her like a palpable weight. A strong wind was blowing, a current of air that seemed to carry the fog in its path.

Off to her right at the rail she heard the sound of voices, a man giving orders in a clear tone of command and a mutter of response. Something was going on and Ann was not a person who could miss an opportunity to be in on any sort of excitement. The wind caught at her as she made her way to the rail, almost pushing her back to her starting point. But she struggled forward until she made out the dim ghostly figures of several men. Instantly she saw that they were lowering one of the boats.

"What's happened?" she asked, catching at a sailor's arm.

He did not turn to look at her, but answered briefly, "Destroyer struck a mine just off our bow. Can't lower her boats and—" He did not finish, but Ann knew the rest of the story without being told. The destroyer must have been badly damaged not to be able to lower its lifeboats, perhaps it had already sunk and the survivors were even now struggling in the stormy windswept water.

She stepped forward just as the boat, a dim shape in the dense fog, swung out on its davits. She saw three or four men jump into it ready to be lowered away and then, with startling force, a hand struck her shoulder.

"One more," said a voice in her ear. "You!" The hand shoved her forward, caught her by the elbow, and half-lifted, half-pushed her into the boat.

It had occurred too suddenly for Ann to protest, even to open her mouth to speak a word. But as she picked herself up from the bottom of the small boat where she had landed, she knew what had happened. In the fog, which reduced visibility almost to zero, and dressed as she was in white slacks, the officer had mistaken her for one of the

corpsmen. She opened her mouth, then shut it quickly. "Why not?" she thought in sudden exultation. "They won't find out the mistake until the boat's in the water, and not even then if I don't talk. Nurses don't go out in lifeboats, but this is my chance."

She knew she was acting against regulations, that she might get into serious trouble, but Ann was too excited to care. She took her place in the bow of the boat and turned away from the others to hide her face, even though there was little chance of her identity being detected in the fog. She heard another man jump into the boat and an order to "Lower away."

The boat was lowered; it hit the water with a resounding splash and the engine started up with a sputtering roar. The boat shot away from the *Sea Haven*, heading for a dim flare of light, just discernible in the swirling mist. Ann looked back once, but already the *Sea Haven* was swallowed up in the fog.

6

THE boat carried a riding light at the bow and, even though its radiance was all but obscured by the heavy mist, Ann kept her head turned away from it. Now that she was actually embarked on this rescue mission, the enormity of what she was doing became more apparent. It was no part of a nurse's duty to go out on a lifeboat with the men trained for such work. When it was discovered that one of the nurses was aboard it was probable that her presence would be resented, at the very least.

But this was no time for regrets, she told herself. She had let herself get into the situation, and now she must abide

by the consequences. In any case it was difficult to think of what might happen to her when she returned to the *Sea Haven* under the present circumstances. The small boat was pitching about in the heaving sea like a shingle, now lurching at the crest of a leaping wave and the next moment plunging downward with sickening speed. The engine was working valiantly, but it seemed to help very little in advancing the boat on its course.

Ann clung to the gunwales with both hands, quite convinced that she would be thrown overboard at the next lurch of the small craft. Behind her she could hear the men shouting to one another above the noise of the wind and waves, but their voices were muffled and the words came to her only in snatches. By the tone of their voices, rather than what they said, she soon gathered that something disturbed them.

"—Can't see the—" "Off to starboard—" "Must have gone down or—" were some of the phrases that reached her. She risked a look toward the stern and made out the dim figure of one of the corpsmen sitting just a few feet from her. He was staring toward her, the outline of his face lighted by the glow of the riding light. But Ann knew that he was not looking at her, that his eyes were straining beyond the bow, trying to pierce the surrounding darkness. He was obviously searching for something.

"Can't see her!" he shouted suddenly. "Not a light to starboard."

Ann turned in the direction he was looking. When the lifeboat swung into the water, she had seen the glow of light from the sinking destroyer. It had not seemed far away, though it was difficult to judge distances in the fog. Now, though they were not five minutes away from the *Sea Haven*, there was no sign of a light to guide them to their destination. Either the destroyer had sunk or they were too low on the water to distinguish it. She gave a gasp

of dismay and, quite forgetting that she had meant to remain silent, shouted, "Has she gone down?"

There had been a buzz of talk behind her, but her question shut it off as though the speakers were suddenly struck dumb. No one replied, but Ann saw a man crawling toward the bow in her direction. She knew then that she had given herself away, that no one would long remain in ignorance as to the true identity of the "corpsman" in the bow. Her first instinct was to turn away and hide her face, then she knew how ridiculous such an action would be. She sat upright and looked straight at the man coming toward her. It was the coxswain, the one person on board who had the authority to say what he thought of her presence there. She said nothing; indeed if she had been required to speak, she wondered wildly what she could say.

The coxswain, whom she now recognized as a man named Phillips, came straight to her side and, clinging to the gunwale, peered into her face for a long moment. If the situation had not been so serious, Ann would have felt that his expression was laughable. He looked completely bewildered, angry, and puzzled all at the same time.

"You see, it was these clothes and when—" she began incoherently. She stopped and started again more calmly, "I know that I shouldn't be here. My action in coming is quite inexcusable."

"You are Miss Bartlett, aren't you?" he said evenly. "We can't turn back now. Please stay right where you are and you won't be in the way."

Ann nodded wordlessly. Phillips' tone was one of cold anger, anger that she knew she deserved, but that was nonetheless discomforting. All the sense of adventure that had animated her since getting into the lifeboat evaporated. She felt completely foolish and very much in the way. "No wonder the other nurses say I'm always having

adventures," she said to herself mournfully. "It's just because I'm such a fool."

Telling herself that she was a fool did not help the present situation. Phillips was angry, not only with her, but with himself for having mistaken her for a corpsmen in her white slack suit. He crouched down, half sitting on the narrow seat beside her, and stared past her into the wind-driven fog.

"This wind ought to clear the fog," he said suddenly. He spoke in a normal voice and Ann realized that he had decided to accept the inevitability of her presence and forget his anger. "I—" Before he could finish what he meant to say a new sound joined the raucous voices of the wind and waves. It was a steady swishing noise that came toward them with a rush of speed. No one had time to wonder what it meant before the downpour of rain was upon them. Within the space of three seconds Ann's clothes were as wet as though she had jumped overboard.

"This ties it," she heard the coxswain exclaim. He crawled toward the stern, leaving Ann to wonder what he meant and to wish with all her heart that she was back on board the *Sea Haven*. The towel which was still wrapped about her head became so heavy with water that she took it off and threw it into the bottom of the boat. Within a moment her hair was plastered down on her head and a steady stream of water was pouring down her back. Fortunately it was a warm rain, a tropical downpour that was common in the area during this season of the year.

She could hear a renewed mutter of conversation among the men, but the added noise of the rain made their words entirely unintelligible. She felt rather than knew that they were discussing the probability of making effective use of the rescue boat under the present difficulties. The rain blotted out everything, and even the lights from the hospital ship had disappeared behind its obscuring curtain. For a frantic moment she wondered how they

would find their way back to the *Sea Haven*, if Phillips decided that it was unwise to proceed on their mission. But even as this possible decision came to her, she knew that such an order would never be given. The lifeboat had been sent to pick up survivors from the destroyer and it would perform that service to the best of its ability, no matter what the circumstances.

Ann had no doubt now that the destroyer had gone down. It had not been far from them when she caught her last glimpse of its lights; they must be very near the spot where it had sunk. The survivors might be anywhere in their vicinity—men fortunate enough to have got away from the sinking ship with their life jackets.

Phillips had reached the same conclusion, for he appeared at her side a moment later and shouted in her ear, "Turn the light, keep sweeping it over the water. Watch for—" He broke off suddenly and reached forward to the light himself. Just off the bow of the boat he had caught sight of what he was looking for. Ann saw him twist the light a little to the right and, beyond the blanket of rain that fell across its feeble beam, she saw a darker object on the water. Both she and Phillips reached overside with the same motion. They had missed running the man down by a few inches, but now he was near enough to grasp the side of the boat.

Ann had a glimpse of a head, a pair of eyes that seemed like those of a hunted animal, before she caught hold of the man's collar and helped the coxswain pull him overside. He lay at her feet, a sodden bundle of clothing.

"We're in the area all right," she heard Phillips shout. "Keep a watch with that light, while I see to this fellow."

Ann grabbed at the light and turned it slowly from side to side, her eyes straining to pierce through an almost solid obscurity of rain. It was impossible; she could see nothing. The light was useless. Unless the boat ran straight into one of the survivors, there was no chance of saving him. But

she did not relax her efforts; she must be on the alert for just such an occasion as the last, ready to shout a warning should they hit upon another survivor.

The ungainly object that loomed up before her the next moment made her heart stop beating. It was a black mass, huge and terrifying as it shot across the bow of the boat. A wave swept it away the next instant, and only when it disappeared did Ann realize that what she had seen was a rubber liferaft.

"Port, port," she screamed. "Liferaft to port."

Her cry was heard, for she felt the boat swing to the left almost immediately. For several minutes Ann lived through a sickening time of fear and doubt. Had the wave swept the liferaft so far that they could not find it? Perhaps it had overturned, spilling its possible occupants into the tumult of those lashing waves. She gritted her teeth and prayed that the rain would cease, the fog would lift, if only for a moment, to grant her sight. But the rain only appeared to increase in intensity, and now she did not know whether it was fog or rain that cut off the visibility so completely.

Phillips, who had been working over the man at her feet, rose and leaned over the gunwale beside her. "You sure?" he cried. "Good night, there she is!"

Ann had seen it again as soon as he: that same looming object, this time bearing down upon them on the crest of a towering wave. It hung balanced there for a second, then swooped down straight toward the lifeboat. Ann saw a hand reach out to snatch at the boat as the raft swept past. Then it made a complete somersault and the hand disappeared, only to reappear a moment later on the gunwale just beside her. She grabbed it and shouted to Phillips to help her. Even as they hauled the man aboard they heard another cry from the stern which told them that the men back there were effecting another rescue.

This last man aboard looked as wet and battered as the

first, but he was in complete control of himself and able to help himself into the lifeboat.

"How many on the raft?" demanded Phillips.

"Two, myself and a gunner's mate."

"Got another back there?" shouted the coxswain.

"One! Off the raft," came the faint response.

Now that they had picked up a man capable of answering questions, Phillips soon discovered that what they had supposed was indeed true. The destroyer had gone down, carrying with it almost its entire crew, if the judgment of this last survivor was to be accepted. Ann, still at her post by the light, heard Phillips' questions and the man's replies. The destroyer had struck a mine and the resulting explosion had fired the ammunition supply. It was one of those chance hits that broke the ship in two as though it had been a matchstick. There had been time to send an SOS to the nearest ship, in this case the *Sea Haven*, but within five minutes the destroyer had begun to go down. Only those men fortunate enough to be on deck at the time of the hit had had a chance of survival, and the sailor doubted that there were many of these. The raft he and the gunner's mate had secured had floated past them just after they struck the water and he could not say what lucky chance had sent it their way.

Ten minutes later they picked up another man who was almost washed over the side of the boat without any help from those within it. He was unconscious, and a gash at the side of his head gave ample reason for his condition. After that they found no one; they seemed to be entirely alone on the pitching, rain-swept water. Ann stayed at the light, but something told her that they had found the last man alive in that angry sea. They would have to return to the *Sea Haven* with only these pitifully few survivors from the two hundred odd who had made up the crew of the destroyer. The knowledge made her sick at heart; if only it had not rained, if only the fog had lifted, if only—if only—

There was no use in thinking like this. They had done all that human endeavor could to effect a rescue, but four men were so tragically few.

"Turn the light all the way round to the left," said Phillips. The order came so suddenly that Ann jumped. She had not known that he was once more beside her.

Wondering whether he had seen something on the water that might be another survivor, she obeyed instantly, her eyes following the direction of its beam. But she saw nothing within its short radius, nothing but the ever-present rain and a boiling mass of water.

Suddenly Ann realized that the sounds she had grown accustomed to in the last half hour had changed in some way. Had a new sound been added to the roar of the wind and rain? Or had one of the familiar noises ceased? She frowned in an agony of concentration. The rain still swished on the sea, the wind whistled across the bow of the boat, and the water slapped against its sides. It was something else—a dead center of silence among the other chaotic sounds. She heard voices from the stern of the boat, one of which seemed to be giving orders. Then, without hearing anything of what they said, she knew what had happened. The steady hum of the engine had ceased.

"It's gone, isn't it?" She spoke calmly, unemotionally, and Phillips replied in the same tone.

"Afraid so. One of the men is working over it, but there's nothing he can do. Some part is missing; the force of the waves broke the propeller."

"Then—" Ann stopped short. She did not have to ask the question. She knew the answer as well as he. The lifeboat was completely out of control, at the mercy of the wind and waves. "I don't suppose there's much use in trying to use the oars in a sea like this, is there?" she said after a moment.

"There might be, if we knew in which direction to row." He turned away and went toward the stern, leav-

ing Ann to absorb this last bit of information by herself.

If she had thought at all before she spoke of rowing back to the *Sea Haven*, she would have realized the impossibility of such a course. Even before they picked up the first survivor the lights of the hospital ship had disappeared behind the fog. Now the added factor of the rain had reduced visibility to zero. The riding light at her elbow proved how little one could see beyond this enveloping obscurity; the beam only served to emphasize its feeble powers. Its ray traveled only about a yard beyond the lamp, lighting up a circle of swirling fog and driving rain. Situated as they were so near the surface of the water, it would be difficult for the lookout on the *Sea Haven* to see them either, even without the fog and rain to render it impossible. Far off in the distance, Ann heard the mournful hoot of a foghorn. But whether it came from port or starboard she could not tell; the nearer noises of the storm crowded out all sense of direction. She knew the *Sea Haven* was signaling to them, trying to guide them back, but, even as she strained her ears to locate the source of the faraway sound, it grew more and more faint.

The full implication of their position threatened to overwhelm her for a moment. No one had to point out the dangers that surrounded them: the slim hope of their finding the hospital ship in this nightmare of pitching seas and drenching rain, and what lay in store for them if they did not locate the *Sea Haven*. Ann clenched her teeth to cut off the cry of horror that nearly escaped her. She must not let her terror overcome her; there were others in the boat in the same situation as she and two of them were certainly much worse off. The first survivor they had rescued still lay near her feet entirely unconscious of what went on about him. The man with the cut on his head was somewhere in the center of the boat. It was the thought of him that restored her to some semblance of calm.

"Phillips!" Her voice seemed a thin wail above the wind,

but she heard an answering shout from the stern. A minute later she saw his head and shoulders emerge from the gloom as he crawled in her direction.

"What is it?" He spoke in an ordinary tone, but Ann caught the note of tension in his words.

"The man with the cut on his head," she exclaimed. "Has it been attended to?"

"There's a medical kit in the boat locker," he said. "You better see to him. There's not much hope of his getting more complete treatment in the— Edwards, Johnston," he broke off, raising his voice to shout at the corpsmen. "Bring that fellow amidships back to the stern and get the medical kit from the locker."

There was a muffled sound of assent and a few minutes afterward the wounded man was lying with his head in Ann's lap so that she might attend to him. The medical kit was a small tin box stocked with bandaging, sulfa powder, and other first-aid equipment. It was the sort of kit that a lifeboat always carried for first-aid treatment.

"Hope he stays unconscious," she said, as she opened the kit. "The less he knows about where we are, the better."

Phillips did not answer. He was staring out at the fog as though trying to pierce its density in the vain hope of seeing the hospital ship. Ann was too busy to notice his strained silence. Phillips was in charge of the boat and crew; it was his responsibility to do what he could to bring the lifeboat to a safe harbor. With the elements against him in such force, it was no wonder that this duty weighed upon him. But when Ann was ready to wind the bandaging about the wounded man's head, he reached forward automatically to help her.

"Have you anything in your kit to keep the bandage dry?" he asked. "This rain won't do that cut any good."

Ann remembered the strip of rubber sheeting that protected her bundle of bandages and took it out. The tin box

would have to protect the medical supplies as best it might. It was the work of a few moments to wrap the sheeting over the bandaged head. With the boat rocking violently, it was hard to do a neat job, but she had the satisfaction of knowing that she had at least provided a covering for the wound.

"What about this man?" Ann indicated the unconscious survivor who still lay in the bottom of the boat near her feet. "Has he any wounds that need attention?" Both she and Phillips knew that they were avoiding the subject of their chances of returning to the *Sea Haven*. In a discussion of the wounded men they were able to preserve some semblance of hope for their future.

Phillips shook his head. "No visible wounds," he replied. "But I'm afraid there's not much hope for him. Must have swallowed half the ocean before we picked him up. We've tried to empty him out, but he hasn't regained consciousness."

"Just as well." Ann hardly realized she had spoken aloud, until she saw Phillips glance at her and then look away. But in that brief moment she caught a world of unspoken meaning. They both knew then that they were thinking the same thought—that they would never reach the *Sea Haven*.

"Which way is the wind blowing?" asked Ann abruptly.

"Can't tell," he replied. "We've tossed about so much I have no idea in which direction the *Sea Haven* is. She was south of us when we shoved off, but who could tell where she is now? Can't hear the foghorn any more, so that's no help."

Ann had not realized that this faint sound had been swallowed up, but she accepted the knowledge without surprise. It seemed scarcely worth comment among the multiple factors that made up their desperate situation.

"If we are blown north we'll be headed for Luzon," she commented. "That is if we strike land at all."

7

No one aboard the lifeboat knew when the others gave up all hope of finding the *Sea Haven*. For two or three hours after catching the last note of the foghorn, they spoke of the hospital ship occasionally in a way that showed they still clung to the idea of returning to her. Then suddenly no one mentioned the ship again. Their thoughts turned in another direction—to their ultimate destination. Where this might be none of them could guess.

All that night the wind blew steadily, sending the small boat along in its path completely without volition of its own. The rain persisted, occasionally letting up for a moment, only to come on again with renewed force as though refreshed by its momentary rest. Whether or not the fog had lifted no one could determine; the atmosphere was so curtained in gray rain that it was impossible to tell whether it was this that shut out all vision or a continuance of the heavy mist.

Conversation on the fate in store for them or on any subject was nearly impossible. It took all their concentration merely to keep some sort of balance in the pitching boat. The wind kicked up a rough sea that tossed their little craft from crest to trough of each wave in a way that threatened at any moment to overturn them. They were wet, bedraggled, and completely without the means to alleviate their miserable situation. Until the sea became calmer, their chief attention must be given to the single art of staying in the boat. At the crest of each wave, when the boat poised a moment before plunging downward once more, Ann was certain that this time it would overturn. She stayed in the bow, both hands gripping the gunwales beside her with fingers that were frozen into a

desperate clutching position. The two wounded men had been tied down with ropes to keep them from being washed overboard. They lay at her feet, mercifully unconscious of where they were.

Ann's watch told her when morning came. There was so little difference between night and day in this gray world that the two were nearly indistinguishable. The atmosphere did seem a little lighter after she knew that it was six in the morning. What time was it when the lifeboat put over the side of the *Sea Haven*? Somewhere around eight, she figured, though the hours meant little to her. It had been an age, a lifetime, that she had been sitting in her present cramped position, clinging to these slender pieces of wood that separated her from the angry sea. Ten hours. It might as well be ten weeks, ten months, ten— She caught herself up short. No use to go on like this. She must be calm, be ready to think, to help plan what they might do if an opportunity arose that needed the full exercise of her wits.

Looking toward the stern where the men were gathered, she saw a large black object floating just behind the boat. For a moment it came to her that this dark mass was a sort of forewarning of their fate; then she looked more closely and saw that it was the rubber liferaft. Obviously one of the men had rescued it along with its occupants and attached it to the boat by a line. The significance of this act escaped her at the moment, but later she was to realize how foresighted an act it was.

Phillips had spent most of the long night hours in the stern with the rest of the crew. Ann knew that they were trying to repair the engine, but guessed that they knew their efforts to be useless. But it was something they could do; and when daylight came—or what passed for daylight in this murky world—they abandoned the attempt. Ann heard one of the men mutter something that sounded like "waste of time," and then a tool was thrown into the

bottom of the boat. A short time later she saw Phillips crawling toward her once more. She had been so alone, situated as she was in the bow with only two unconscious men for company, that the coxswain's appearance brought her a feeling of relief. She knew he was still annoyed with her for having come with the boat crew, even though he had said nothing to show it since his first outburst. Nonetheless, Ann was determined to prove that she was not going to be an added burden in their present danger. As he came toward her she made an effort to sit up straighter and assume a look of reassuring calm that she was far from feeling.

Phillips was a young man, about Ann's own age, but he had a serious, somewhat humorless outlook on life that made him seem far older than he actually was. His thin, sharp-featured face wore a look of habitual concern and little worrying lines marked his forehead. He looked at Ann now as she sat upright in the bow of the boat, smiling at him as though she had not a care in the world. Not for anything would Ann have let him know what an effort this smile cost her.

"No hope of fixing the engine," he said abruptly. "If the sea gets calmer we can try rowing, but, as I remember, the current will carry us to the north anyway."

"The wind may be taking us in that direction now," replied Ann. "I wonder how far we have been carried. We were off the north end of Mindoro when we left the *Sea Haven*; we might be near the mouth of Manila Bay by now."

"Perhaps. Miss Bartlett, you've been in the Philippines before, haven't you?"

"I was on Bataan during most of the campaign in 1941," she said. "Why do you ask?"

He did not answer, but bent over to look at the two men lying at Ann's feet. She saw him feeling for the pulse of the first man they had picked up and then leaning down to

look at him more closely. He did not need to tell her that the man was dead; she knew it by the quick, final gesture of his hands as he began to loosen the rope that bound him into the boat. He handed her the man's identification tag and a small bundle of papers and personal effects which he took from his pocket. These she stowed away in her kit; one day, if they came safely out of this holocaust of wind and storm, these pitiful possessions would be sent to the man's family.

It seemed a heartless thing to bury this comrade at sea, to send him to his final resting place in this lonely waste of angry water. But Ann knew it must be done. The boat was already overcrowded; in their present peril there was no room to carry the man to a possible burial place ashore.

The men were quiet as the coxswain murmured the words of the burial service. Ann listened with bowed head as the familiar words came to her in snatches, blown on the wind and whirled past her into the rain and storm. Then in another moment the man was gone, swallowed up instantly into the nothingness of this vast gray sea. It had happened so suddenly that afterward Ann could only recall that brief drama as though it were part of a dream. As soon as the man had disappeared, Phillips became his brusque self once more. The more human, understanding side of him that he had revealed for an instant was laid aside like an unwanted garment.

"I'll get the men to open the locker. We must ration the food stores and water. No telling how long we'll have to make them last." He went toward the stern once more and a short time later one of the crew brought Ann two biscuits and a water bottle, which he held as carefully as though it contained liquid gold.

"We're all set for water as long as the rain keeps up," he said. "We're trying to catch some in a tarpaulin."

"Take this towel," said Ann, reaching for the bathtowel

at her feet. "You can wring a lot out of it. Got any extra containers?"

"A couple of oil cans we can empty now the engine's conked out. How's this man here?"

"All right, I hope. I just looked at his bandages and they've kept fairly dry. I'll change them once the rain holds off."

Almost as though her mention of the rain's stopping was the one necessary word to effect such an event, the downpour ceased. It had been falling so long and so heavily that Ann had begun to feel that it was part of her misery to be soaked to the skin with no hope of keeping dry. But once the rain stopped, the situation was not notably improved. The wind continued to blow and the sea was as rough as before. A blanket of fog covered them, so dense that there was little hope of the sun's burning it away.

Ann did not dare move from her seat in the bow; she sat where she was, cold, wet, and miserably conscious that each lurch of the waves carried them farther into the unknown; most probably into enemy waters. When the sun did burst through this curtain of mist it would only serve to reveal them to the enemy. Much as she wanted to feel the warmth of its rays, she knew that its light would increase their danger a hundredfold. She had read of Jap planes that strafed lifeboats and rafts; there was no reason to suppose that their craft would be spared.

All that day the storm continued; hour after hour Ann remained in that cramped position, not daring to move for fear of losing her balance in the tossing boat. Occasionally Phillips came to speak to her, but there was little encouragement they could give each other. Both knew that the wind in all likelihood was carrying them northward and of the probable fate that lay in wait for them. Either they would be spotted by a Jap plane when the fog lifted or they would strike shore somewhere—and all the land that lay

to the north was in Japanese hands. The alternatives were equally fatal. The hope that they might be rescued before either of these events occurred was too slim to entertain. But they did not talk of this—neither of the two anticipated events had yet occurred, and meantime there was the wordless, inexpressible hope that something, anything, would happen to bring them out of this alive.

As the gray light that was their only sign of day faded into a black darkness, the wind began to fall. Gradually, as though regretful of relinquishing its power over the sea, it began to blow less strongly, then subsided into fitful, angry gusts that sent drenching sprays of water into the boat. Ann had helped bail the boat from time to time during that endless day, and these added deluges of water seemed more aggravating than the previous steady downpour.

But by the time the supper ration was passed around, the wind was gone completely. The sea was as rough as ever, the boat pitched as crazily as before, but the dead calm of the air brought immeasurable relief and comfort to all of them. Ann felt her spirits rise and knew by the increased talk from the stern that the men shared her feeling. One annoyance was gone; might there not be reason to hope that the sea would become calm, that a miraculous rescue might be effected? Ann knew she was indulging in a wild dream, but anything was better than the dull despair that had weighed on her all day.

"We've kept a few blankets dry in the locker," said Phillips, gesturing toward the small compartment in the stern of the boat. "We're going to arrange a series of watches. Can you make yourself comfortable up here in the bow?"

Ann, who secretly felt that the very idea of sleep was ridiculous, nodded. "When is my watch?" she asked. "I want to take my turn."

Phillips glanced at her and Ann saw him start to smile. "As long as you're part of the crew you'll get your turn. I'll wake you at four."

"Wake me," thought Ann. "You won't have to do that."

But she did not know her own weariness. As soon as she had wrapped herself in the blanket, a feeling of lassitude stole over her. Perhaps it was the fact that the rain and wind had ceased, that the vague, unmentionable hope of rescue had brought some peace of mind that soothed her. In any case, she had scarcely settled herself as comfortably as possible with her head on her arms before she was asleep. She did not share those long hours of watching and waiting for the dawn; she did not know when the waves began to subside. The long rollers that followed in the wake of the breaking waves sent the boat along with an even rise and fall that seemed miraculously soothing in comparison with its former violent motion.

Ann had slept too soundly for dreams. When Phillips woke her at four it was still dark, and it took her several minutes to orient herself. Where was she? Why was it so dark and why was that expanse of spangled sky above her?

"The fog's lifted," she heard the coxswain say. He spoke quickly, as though anxious to recall her to reality as soon as possible. "All clear now."

She knew then where she was, remembered all the long hours that had passed since she had left the *Sea Haven*. But it was to a different world that she awoke—different from the turmoil of waves and swirling fog that had surrounded them when she fell asleep. The air was fresh and clear, the sea comparatively smooth, and the stars above shone with a rain-washed clarity. It made her feel better, more hopeful, just to breathe this fog-free air.

"Any sign of a ship?" she asked, when she had tossed her blanket aside. She stood up and then sat down suddenly. Her legs were so stiff from her long hours of sitting in one position that there was no feeling in them at all. "Heavens," she exclaimed, "I'll have to get my sea legs or I won't be much use."

"We haven't seen a thing yet," replied Phillips. He

sounded worried. "I hoped we hadn't drifted as far north as we obviously have," he confessed. "But there's no use blinking the fact that we're miles north of the area where our ships are operating." He looked upward toward the stars which had shown their position.

"But our planes fly over to bomb the Manila area all the time," exclaimed Ann. "I hadn't thought of it before, but couldn't we arrange some sort of signal if we see one? Doesn't the lifeboat carry that coloring stuff you throw in the water to attract attention?"

Phillips shook his head. "I looked for it. We'll have to rely on their spotting us themselves unless—" He did not finish, but Ann knew what he meant to say. Unless a Jap plane saw them first.

It was not a comforting thought with which to begin her period of watching, but it served the purpose of keeping her very much on the alert. One of the crewmen was on watch with her at his post in the stern, but he was too far away to give her the feeling of company. She stayed in the bow, looking out over the rolling lead-colored expanse of the sea, feeling more alone than she had ever been in her life. The wounded man still lay near her feet, and an inspection of his bandages showed her that they were all right for the present. It was too dark to change the bandage now; it would have to wait for daylight.

Ann never forgot those still, lonely hours until the eastern sky began to lighten. She had ample time to regret the impulse that had brought her to her present danger—yet, it was too late to think of that. It was not the past but the future that was important now, and what that future might bring meant life or death for all of them.

She had never thought she would dread the light of the coming day, but as the sun burst up out of the sea, a glorious crimson glow, she knew that it brought with its light nothing but possible disaster. Now there was nothing to hide them from an enemy ship or plane. They were as ex-

posed to view as a black fly on a sheet of paper. The day promised to be as clear as the previous one had been stormy. Gradually, as the sun got higher, it burned away the lingering traces of mist on the surface of the water, extending their line of vision to the farthest edges of the horizon. On all that round bowl of sea there was no sign of a ship, no shadow that could be taken for land.

The others awoke as the sun grew hotter, and their first impulse was to dry their sodden clothing. Ann's thin slack suit dried out almost immediately and she knew then that, if she had suffered from being water-soaked the day before, she would be even more miserable under the brazen burning of the sun. She changed the bandaging on the wounded man's head, gratified to discover that his wound was no worse from its hasty treatment.

"We'll have to fix some protection from the sun for him," said Ann, when the bandaging was finished. "He's beginning to regain consciousness, too."

Two of the sailors rigged the tarpaulin on a pair of oars so that it served as an awning to cover the entire bow. Ann was grateful for its shelter and, since Phillips had told her to stay where she was to care for the wounded man, she tried not to think that she was receiving any special consideration by remaining there. The others had no such protection, and it was obvious that they would soon begin to feel the sun. She ate her breakfast of biscuits and water and managed to force some water between her patient's lips. He was fully conscious now, but had no idea where he was, and Ann took pains to conceal the situation from him. He lay quietly in the bottom of the boat, staring up at Ann with a puzzled look in his eyes that she found painfully uncomfortable. No matter where she looked, either out to sea or toward the stern, those eyes seemed to bore through her, asking a question she dared not answer.

The crew, under Phillips' direction, organized itself

into rowing teams and, as soon as the men had eaten, they began to row in a southerly direction. Perhaps they knew as well as the coxswain that they were accomplishing very little, but they were eager to take some action that gave them the illusion of making progress toward safety. All during the morning they kept at it, changing places often, as the sun soon exhausted them. Ann wished she had some more strenuous duty to perform, but she knew that she must watch over the wounded man and remained at her post, gradually growing more and more oppressed by the heat and the sure knowledge that the rowers were making almost no headway. A strong current pushed them in the opposite direction, and Ann had the feeling that they were standing still in this one burning spot on the ocean.

No one talked much; the first exultation that the clearing weather brought had soon passed into apathy under the heat of the sun. They all knew the dangers of their exposed position, and from the way each of the men scanned the sky and sea Ann knew they were all animated by the same fear of enemy planes or ships.

Toward noon Ann fell into a doze, overcome by heat and weariness. She was startled into full consciousness by a cry that she had been unconsciously dreading since dawn.

"Ships! Off to the north!"

She stood up instantly, striking her head on the tarpaulin above her. Then she saw them; a dark row of objects on the horizon that looked like toy ships in the hazy distance. Their outline was just faintly visible, and suddenly a wild hope surged through her.

"Are they—?" The words caught in her throat.

"Japs."

The single word dropped into the silence that followed Ann's outburst with the weight of a death blow. It was just that to the hope that had animated her. Those were not American ships; they were ships of the enemy. She sank

down and stared at the fatal gray objects. The rest of the crew looked at them just as she did, in an unmoving, transfixed silence. They were so absorbed in the sight that no one noticed the black dots above that line of ships, dots that grew larger with each passing moment. They might have been birds, yet no bird made that deep humming sound in flight.

It was that deadly drone that finally broke the tension that held them. One of the men glanced up and shouted a warning. Instantly the others were aware of this nearer danger. Ann watched the V-shaped group of five planes swoop toward them, knowing she could do nothing, that the planes were flying low enough so that there was little or no chance of the boat's escaping detection. The noise of the planes filled the air about them, a crescendo of roaring sound that beat against her ears, blotting out all sense of anything but that message of death.

They were right overhead now, flying low, their outline black against the blue of the sky. Ann did not know that she was holding her breath, until the planes passed beyond them and she felt herself relax. She turned to look at the others and they stared at one another wordlessly.

"They missed us!" It was Ann who spoke and her voice was harsh with relief.

She looked upward once more and knew then that she had spoken too soon. The plane on the rear of the left echelon had turned off and was diving down toward them. The whole world seemed to burst into a roar. She could not see the spray of machine-gun bullets, though the front of the plane was spitting a sheet of bright orange fire. The water about the boat seemed to boil up about them, then a sharp tearing noise ripped through the frail wood. Ann saw one of the crew fall forward on his face into the water that rose up from the bottom of the boat and poured in an engulfing stream over the gunwales.

ANN was in the water before she was fully conscious that the lifeboat had been shattered by the machine-gun fire. She remembered seeing the water pour in over the side, covering the man who had fallen forward into the swirling flood. Then all sight and sound was blotted out as she went under. It happened too quickly for her to be prepared for that black and choking sea; it closed over her head instantly and she felt herself sinking as though her body had no buoyancy. But her instinct was to fight for air and her arms and legs moved without her conscious volition. The next moment her head struck something and she began to go down once more.

The blow, instead of stunning her as it might well have done under ordinary circumstances, restored her to a full realization of her danger. She was drowning and she was doing nothing to help herself. A revitalizing force sent strength to her limbs and she began to struggle with all her might. She was a good swimmer and, now that full consciousness had returned to her, she realized that she could make use of this skill. She came to the surface more quickly than she had hoped and immediately in front of her saw the lifeboat. It was half-submerged, but still afloat. She reached up to grip the gunwale, just as another hand rose out of the water beside her to clutch frantically at the same object. Ann snatched at the man's fingers and pulled them toward the boat. Then the man's head broke the surface and she recognized Phillips. There was an ugly cut across his forehead from which the blood poured down into his eyes, but he seemed in complete possession of his senses and not at all bewildered by the fate that had overtaken them.

He clung to the gunwale for a moment to regain his breath and then ducked his head under water to wash the blood out of his eyes.

"Stay here," he directed Ann a moment later. "Going to see about the others."

Ann was too much out of breath to reply. She reached out to stop him, realizing he was in no condition to try to rescue those who might need his help, but he was gone before she could touch him. A second later she heard a shout from the other side of the boat and a voice reply. Two of the others were safe at least, but she had not the strength to pull herself up over the edge of the gunwale to see who they were. Then in the next instant she remembered the wounded man who was her responsibility. He would not be able to help himself; she must find him.

For the first time she looked about with eyes that really saw. The boat to which she slung was tipped crazily toward the portside, and where she clung to it she could see the shattered wood where the bullets had ripped through the frail framework. There was no hope of using the lifeboat again; she knew that it would sink at any moment. When that happened—but she had no time to think of that now. Just beyond the bow of the boat she had caught a glimpse of something that looked like a man's head, a dark object that bobbed to the surface only to disappear the next instant. She let go of the boat, took a deep breath, and struck off toward the spot where the man had gone down. It was only a few yards distant, and by the time she reached the place there was no sign of a human being. She heard someone shouting her name, but she paid no attention. They were calling to her to come back, but until she made certain that the man had really gone she would not give up the search.

A wave slapped against her face, nearly driving the last gasping breath from her lungs, but she managed to keep her head above water. Her arms felt like leaden weights,

but she forced them to keep moving. Someone was out here who needed help; she could not go back yet. Then something bumped against her right leg and she dived to reach for that inert body. She had been right; her first touch told her that. The man was drowning; he was limp and apparently lifeless. It required no effort to get him to the surface; he was incapable of fighting for a hold on her as so many drowning people do. She caught hold of his clothing and fought to the surface, dragging him behind her.

But she was weaker than she realized and the man's weight made it impossible to get above the water. She felt her strength go, knew that her legs and her free arm were incapable of helping her, for she could not move them. But she held her grip on the man's clothing, for now he was the straw that a drowning person will cling to. They were going down, farther and farther down into those cold green depths, the one dragging the other. A dull roaring sounded in her ears, then—nothing.

She was lying in a huddled heap on some strange flat surface when she opened her eyes. It was smooth and wet, but it held her. For a moment she wondered if this could be the bottom of the ocean, if she had drowned and were lying there with all the weight of the sea above her. Suddenly she sneezed and consciousness returned. She lifted her head and looked about her. There were several men sitting near her; they seemed to be perched on a sort of low railing, and their feet were on this same surface where she lay. One man lay near their feet, not far from her, and it was the sight of his inert body that brought her back to reality. Was this the man she had tried to save?

"Who is that?" She had wanted to speak aloud, but her voice came in a hoarse whisper. Lifting herself to her elbows, she made an effort to stand.

"Stay where you are." It was an order and she recognized Phillips' voice. "Sorry, Miss Bartlett, but you'll upset the raft." Ann did not try to assimilate the knowledge that

she was on a raft. She remembered that the rubber liferaft had been tied to the lifeboat, but how she had got aboard it she was too confused to imagine. She could hear the men talking, knew they were arguing about something, but she was too weary to pay attention, even to think. She closed her eyes, felt the sun beating down upon her, and was grateful for its warming strength. She was alive. It was enough for her that this was so.

When she was once more conscious of voices and the presence of other human beings, the light had dimmed and a soft radiance fell over the sea. She had been asleep and had awakened with a clear head, quite capable of comprehending all that was going on. She sat up slowly and looked about her. The men still sat along the edge of the raft and the other man lay where she had last seen him near their feet. Once again she asked her question.

"Who is that?"

"That wounded fellow; Evans, his name is." It was Phillips who spoke.

"Is he the one who—I mean is he alive?"

"Yes to both questions. He owes his life to you. None of the rest of us saw him going down. He's alive, but—" He did not finish and Ann saw him shrug his shoulders.

"Owes his life to me," she repeated slowly. "Phillips, it was you who saved us both, wasn't it?"

He did not reply and she did not insist on an answer. She stared up at him, a hundred questions crowding into her thoughts. How many of the men in the lifeboat had been saved was her first concern. She tried to think how many there had been when the boat had left the *Sea Haven*. Six, counting herself. One had died and been buried at sea; she remembered that. But she couldn't make her brain work for her; it was all too bewildering, too terribly confusing. She had been looking at Phillips and now she saw the bandage about his head and remembered the cut on his forehead.

There must have been something in her eyes, some hint of the bewilderment that troubled her, for Phillips suddenly leaned toward her and began talking in a low, rapid voice, "I brought you and Evans aboard the raft. One of the men got it free before the boat sank. The rest of us are all here. I wish you'd look at this cut on my head."

It was something she could do, some small measure of repayment for saving her life. She did not let him finish speaking.

"The kit!" She looked about her frantically, searching the smooth surface of the raft floor for that familiar box, knowing as she did so that it was gone.

"There's a small first-aid kit in the raft." Again it was Phillips who restored her to a calm sense of reality.

She saw him reach toward a compartment at one end of the raft and pull out a small box. "Everything here," he said cheerfully. "Fishhooks, water purifier, flashlight. All the comforts of home." He seemed determined to put a favorable construction on a situation that was obviously nearly hopeless.

Ann had taken a hasty look at the gently heaving expanse of water that surrounded them on all sides. Except that the line of battleships on the far horizon had disappeared, it was the same limitless stretch of ocean she had seen just before the plane struck.

She found bandages and sulfa powder in the kit. Phillips' cut was not deep and, after seeing that it was clean and shaking some of the powder on it, she began to bandage it with swift practiced fingers.

"What happened to the planes?" she asked in a conversational tone. She was determined to show Phillips that she could be as calm as he.

"Guess they thought they'd finished us off. I was too busy to notice, but by the time we were all on the raft they'd gone. Look here, we pumped some of the water out

of Evans, but he's still out. Think you better try to bring him to?"

Ann shook her head. She had already noticed that he was breathing naturally and was apparently asleep.

"I'll change his bandage. Luckily sea water won't hurt him. I think he'll be all right."

While she rebandaged Evans' wound, she tried to think back and account for the men who sat so near her. There were eight of them aboard the raft, counting herself and the man whose wound she was attending. There had been six aboard the lifeboat when it left the *Sea Haven*. It was an effort to account for their present number. Four men had been rescued from the destroyer, but one had died. Nine; she struggled to remember what had happened after that. The man she had seen fall forward under the hail of Japanese bullets; he had been one of the original crewmen. That was it. Eight left, and they were all here on this frail little craft. It was a miracle that so many had reached the precarious safety of this tiny floating island. Ann had seen many of these rubber rafts in recent years, she had read of men who had lived on them for days and weeks. But she had never heard of eight people surviving on one of them. There was no room to move, the waterline was only a few inches below the edge of the "rail," and the rolling heave of the waves sent a small deluge of water overside with each rise and fall of the raft. The men were bailing it out, but they all knew that a heavy wave could swamp the boat in an instant.

"Where is the current carrying us now?" asked Ann suddenly. "Still north?"

Phillips nodded. "Pretty fast, too. We must be in a regular channel of some sort. If we keep on at this rate, we ought to sight land fairly soon. We can't be far from one of the islands. If it stays clear, we'll be able to get some idea of our position from the stars tonight."

"What do you mean by 'fairly soon'?" It was Larson the

gunner's mate they had rescued from the destroyer, who spoke. He was a small man with a round, moonlike face, which made him look as though he were little more than a boy.

Phillips merely shrugged his shoulders. He had been in charge of the boat crew and now the responsibility for the safety of the raft and its occupants rested on him. Ann had seen him looking from one to another of the men in a speculative way, and she guessed that he was trying to judge the character and stamina of each one in order to be able to foresee their reaction to the probable hardships that lay ahead. He held a little booklet in one hand and had evidently been studying it. Ann leaned forward to see its title.

"'Survival on Land and Sea,' " she read aloud. "Was that book on the raft, too?"

"You bet, and it's our Bible from here on in. We've got to begin planning some definite course of action. We've checked the water supply from our canteens and have enough to last out the night. There's a chemical apparatus for removing salt from sea water aboard, and we'll have to set it up in the morning. The food situation is tough. Just a handful of biscuits in that compartment. But this book says a man can survive for several weeks without food if he has plenty of water. So we'll forget about food. If I'm any judge, we're been carried by the current toward Luzon and it can't be far away. Once ashore we can scare up enough to eat."

"But Luzon is—" The words burst from Ann involuntarily but were checked abruptly by the look Phillips gave her. He and all the rest of the men knew that Luzon was in Jap hands. There was no use in emphasizing the fact. "Sorry," she muttered.

"Okay, Miss Bartlett. The Japs can't be watching every foot of the shoreline, and we may hit it without their spotting us. Now we'd better get organized. It says here that when a current is carrying a raft along it's better to sit on

the bottom of a raft to get its full drag. We'll have to move carefully. Larson, you first. Go sit by Miss Bartlett. Watch out for Evans; he'll have to lie across our laps once we get set."

As he directed the men to the places he assigned, Ann could not help but wonder at the change that had come over Phillips. He had lost the look of anxious tension he had worn in the lifeboat. His expression was almost cheerful and his voice had taken on a new note of authority. She realized that the other men felt as confident as she of his ability to see them through to safety.

When the men were all seated on the floor of the raft there was not a square inch of room in which to move about. Evans lay with his head in Ann's lap, stretched out across the legs of the men nearest her. They fitted into the confined space like the pieces of a picture puzzle. Phillips, who had taken a position near the compartment at one end of the boat, looked down the length of the raft toward Ann and grinned.

"Neat," was his pronouncement, "but it's all wrong according to the book. We ought to arrange ourselves so we can exercise our feet now that they're wet and keep our clothing dry. But we can sacrifice all that for speed. Anything that'll get us ashore the quickest is what we're after now. It says that everyone should be assigned a special job, too, but the only thing we can do is see that we keep the raft as dry as possible. Take off your blouses and keep mopping the space nearest you."

The men obeyed, and the simple task kept them occupied. Ann sat with her feet stretched straight out before her, wondering just how long she would be able to maintain this restricted position. With Evans' head on her lap she could not even draw her knees up, and she knew that the most difficult part of what lay ahead might well be to remain in this one unmoving pose. Gradually a numbness that made her feel that she was paralyzed caused her to

lose all feeling in her legs, and she forgot to think of them.

Phillips had arranged a series of watches for the night, but no one could sleep under the circumstances. As a result they were all on the alert during the long hours that followed. They did not talk a great deal. Sometimes Ann heard a murmur of voices among the men, but she felt no compulsion to speak. In the period that had elapsed since leaving the *Sea Haven*, she had not had much time for thought. Now the realization that her friends aboard the hospital ship had no idea what had become of her occurred to her with horrifying force. No one had seen her get into the lifeboat, no one could have the slightest suspicion that she had been foolhardy enough to allow that mistake in identity to be made. They must think she had been washed overboard; that was the one conclusion to which they could come. It now became as great a concern as her own safety to know of the uncertainty and sorrow she was causing her friends. She had a responsibility to them as well as to herself, and during the ensuing hours Ann had ample time to realize that her impulsive act in getting into the lifeboat might have an effect on others as well as herself. It was not a thought that helped to bolster her self-respect.

The sky clouded over before the stars came out, so Phillips had no opportunity to orient their position any more exactly. But he still seemed certain that the raft was being carried toward Luzon and at a considerable rate of speed. The clouds thinned toward morning and a reddening sky promised another day of blazing heat. As the sun rose higher in the east, they all turned to stare at the horizon. They did not say what they hoped to see there; they did not have to. But the ocean stretched in a long barren plain before them; there was nothing between it and the line where it met the sky.

"I'd be glad even to see a Jap ship," said one of the men suddenly. "I wouldn't feel so blasted lonesome."

"Speaking of Japs," replied Phillips, "we can pretty

well count on planes and ships in these waters. The ships probably won't spot us unless they get really near, but the planes are another story. Hey, there they come!" His voice had risen to a shout and every head turned in the direction of his uplifted arm. Just visible in the lightening sky to the north was another group of black dots, dots that needed no second look to tell them they were planes.

"Into the water," snapped Phillips. "Careful, one at a time. Hang on to the edge and when the planes come over duck under water. We want to make them think the raft is empty."

The men obeyed, sliding overside one after another. Ann had not moved; Evans, who had once more sunk into unconsciousness, lay like a leaden weight upon her knees. She saw Phillips look at her and frown as though wondering how to deal with the wounded man. Obviously he could not go into the water. Then he turned quickly to the compartment and pulled out a square of canvas.

"Cover him with that," he ordered, "and go over. Hurry."

Ann did not need the warning. Already the droning roar of the oncoming planes was growing louder. She lifted Evans to one side and spread the canvas over him; it would have to serve to hide him from those watchful eyes above them. Then, hauling herself up by her arms, for her legs were too numb to help her, she half-slid, half-rolled into the water. She went over her head immediately and came up with her nose and mouth full of salt water. Someone caught her hand and pulled her toward the raft and she clung there, only conscious of the crescendo of sound that blotted all thought from her mind. She heard Phillips' voice shout, "Duck," and obeyed mechanically, holding her breath until it seemed her lungs would burst.

The man beside her caught at her wrist as a signal to lift her head above water, after what seemed an endless, aching

period of time. She came up gasping, scarcely able to maintain her hold on the raft. When she could look about her, she saw that the planes had swept past them and were already disappearing toward the south. The ruse had worked.

It was difficult to get everyone aboard the raft once more without upsetting it, but with care they accomplished the feat. Their sodden clothing brought a dangerous amount of water aboard with them, and it was their first concern to dry themselves out and get rid of the excess water. It took them the better part of an hour to wring out their clothing and bail the raft, and by the time it was done, Phillips had decided on a new seating arrangement. A light wind had sprung up from the south and he felt that they should take advantage of it. He placed them about the edge of the raft so that their bodies offered wind resistance. A makeshift sail was made from the canvas and held aloft by the men in turn. They were making good progress now and, if it had not been for the torturing heat of the sun, they might all have felt fairly cheerful. They used their blouses to cover their heads, wetting them frequently in the sea, but the sun dried them almost instantly and seemed to sear through the heavy cloth. Ann and Evans were on the floor of the raft in the shade of the sail, but it was little protection. The heat was stupefying, and gradually Ann fell into a sort of conscious coma. She knew she was thirsty, that the sips of water she had had from the canteen and from the meager supply manufactured with the chemicals had only served to aggravate her desire for water. Her tongue was growing dry and she found it more and more difficult to swallow.

From time to time she roused herself to look at Evans, but there was nothing to do for him, and she could only be thankful that he was unconscious; at least he was not aware of his suffering. Hour after hour she sat in unmoving si-

lence, her brain seemed to be on fire and she could think of nothing. She was only aware that she was thirsty, that her whole body craved water.

Late in the afternoon she was roused once again by that shout of "Planes!" Once again she responded almost automatically to the warning, pulling herself over the side of the raft and into the water with arms that felt like lifeless pieces of wood. The cool water revived her and she suddenly felt more alive, more conscious of what was going on about her. She heard the approaching planes, knew they were coming nearer with each passing moment. Suddenly she heard another shout from Phillips, then a cry from the man nearest her. She turned her head to stare at him. He was waving one arm and trying to scramble back aboard the raft at the same time. Slowly she turned her head to look up. The planes were overhead now, traveling at a tremendous rate of speed. She did not have to look twice to see that familiar white star under the wings. They were American, but never had anything looked farther away, more inaccessible, than those high-flying planes. They had passed over almost before she identified them and already were nothing but black specks in the southern sky.

9

ALL during the night following that brief and heart-breaking glimpse of the American planes, and even in the dragging hours of the next day, no one spoke about that ill-fated act which had sent them overside out of sight of their possible rescuers. It was too great a disaster to bear discussion, but they could not blame themselves for it. If

the planes had been Jap aircraft, as they had the first time, going overside would have been their only hope of escaping detection.

But the thought of what might have been had they been in a position to signal the planes was uppermost in everyone's thoughts. Ann had only to look into the faces of the men nearest her to know that they were thinking as she was. "If only they had waited to identify the planes—if only the planes had flown lower and seen the men trying to wave from the water—if only—if only—" The two hopeless words became a sort of meaningless chant in her mind.

There was very little to turn her thoughts into other channels. Several times during that night and day they heard the warning drone that told of approaching planes. But now they stayed aboard the raft until the last possible moment in order to identify them, and each time the planes were Japanese. It became more and more difficult for Ann to pull herself over the side of the raft, into the water and out again. Each time she was certain she could not do it again, yet, when she heard Phillips' order to abandon the raft, she obeyed with a sort of mechanical movement of her arms and legs.

It was not hunger that weakened her; strangely she felt no desire for food. It was the sun, that blazing ceaseless heat that beat down on them hour after hour during the day. The wind had died on the second day and now they had to depend on the current's carrying them along. The canvas awning did little good; Ann felt that she was in an oven that was slowly but surely draining every ounce of moisture from her body. The small amount of water they got from the chemical apparatus only sufficed for a few swallows a day, a mere wetting of the lips with water that had a dead, brackish taste.

They paid little heed to the ships that passed frequently along the horizon line north of them. These were too far away to see their low-lying craft, and now they scarcely

glanced up when someone mentioned that others had come into view. They were not interested in the sight of a distant ship; what they wanted to see was a larger object on the horizon: the shape and promise of land.

By evening of the second day Ann was so sunk in apathy that she was incapable of rousing herself when the water ration was passed around. Larson, who sat beside her, had to shake her to make her realize that it was her turn to take a drink. She lifted her head to stare at him and then at the familiar water bottle with eyes that held no comprehension. Larson splashed a handful of sea water into her face and instantly she felt better.

"You ought to do that from time to time," he said quietly. "You get sort of cooled off anyway."

She tried to smile and took the water bottle. "Thanks," she said struggling to get the word through her parched lips. "Let me give Evans his share."

She leaned over the man whose head all during the past two days and nights had lain upon her lap. She had grown used to the weight of it and was always aware that this wounded man was her responsibility. Occasionally he had recovered some measure of consciousness, but he never was lucid enough to realize where he was and always sank back into a coma after muttering a few unintelligible words. Except to see that his bandage was kept dry, there was nothing she could do for him. In many ways, she thought, he was the most fortunate person among them.

Now, as she bent over him, she realized that for the first time he was looking up at her with eyes that really saw her. She met that look steadily, wishing desperately that she had some word of comfort to offer him.

"Water," she said softly. "Here's some water." She poured a little between his lips, but he did not swallow it. She watched the precious drops roll down his bearded chin, but she did not begrudge them. She knew suddenly that this one moment of clarity would be his last. Then his

lips moved and she saw that he was trying to smile. Instantly she forced herself to smile in return; her lips were so cracked and parched that the effort almost made her cry aloud with pain.

"Thanks!" The word came clearly. He was looking into her eyes as he said it. The next moment his head rolled to one side and he was dead.

Ann sat for a few minutes saying nothing, making no move to tell the others what had happened. Larson had seen; she heard the sound he made when Evans said that last word. She did not move when he and two of the other men lifted him from her lap. There was only one thought in her mind at this moment and that was one of stunned surprise. He had thanked her, thanked her for her smile. She knew that was what he had meant. And she had done nothing, had been unable to help him in any real sense. Through a sort of dazed comprehension she heard Phillips repeat once again those brief words of the burial service. She saw them lift Evans to the edge of the raft, and suddenly she buried her face in her hands. She couldn't cry, she had not the strength to let the sobs that choked her break. Some time later, when she raised her head once more, Evans had gone. This again was something that no one spoke of.

The sky did not cloud over as it had on previous nights since they had been aboard the raft. The red glow of the setting sun was flooding the sky when Ann was once more able to lift her head. She saw that Phillips, sitting on the edge of the opposite end of the raft, was not looking toward the sunset, but eastward toward what seemed to her an empty sea. She noted vaguely that there were clouds in that direction, great billowy masses that rose into the sky like giant puffs of cotton.

"Cumulus clouds," said Phillips. He spoke as though it was an announcement of tremendous importance. They all caught the note of excitement in his voice.

"Cumulus clouds?" Ann's voice betrayed the effort it cost her to speak the words.

Phillips looked at her, seemed about to speak, and then shook his head. "Just noticing them," he said. He turned toward the east once again and said nothing more.

But Ann had forgotten she had asked a question almost before he finished speaking. A light breeze had sprung up that was so refreshing she turned her face to catch its full benefit. She heard Phillips ask the men to sit along the edge of the raft, and then she tried to pull herself up too.

"Never mind, Miss Bartlett," said Phillips. "Guess you're too slim to make much difference to the wind anyway."

Ann shook her head stubbornly and straightened up with a jerk. She would not allow Phillips to treat her any differently from the others; she was part of the crew, she would do her duty as well as they. But that sudden violent motion was too much for her; it seemed to exhaust her last spark of energy and she felt herself fall forward to the floor of the raft. She tried to rise once, then a wave of nausea and black darkness swept over her. No one tried to rouse her; the men realized the blessed release that unconsciousness could bring.

She did not know that the first glimmer of stars was soon covered by a gray curtain of fog that rolled out of the western sea as though it were alive. It fell over them like a palpable weight, blotting out the sea and sky and even seeming to absorb the air they breathed. The breeze freshened and grew gradually stronger until it was a powerful rush of wind, driving the shallow craft over the surface of the water like a leaf. She was unaware of the struggle going on about her to keep the raft afloat in that hurrying wind. The water slapped over the sides of the raft until she lay in a wash several inches deep. Someone hauled her to a sitting position then, propping her against a corner of the raft for fear she might drown in the water that no amount of bail-

ing could keep out. Still she did not wake; she was completely and utterly used up by the lack of food and water and the enervating heat of the sun.

How many hours they fought to keep the raft afloat none of the men could estimate. The endless necessity of keeping on the alert in their exhausted condition made time meaningless. But one moment of relaxation meant disaster, and this looming dread forced them beyond the limits of their endurance. The raft was like something alive on that lurching sea; it swept forward in the path of the wind as though it had some purpose, some destination. But the obscuring fog hid all sight from their eyes and the men never knew what lay before them.

Hour after hour they continued to balance themselves, first on one side of the raft, then on the other, in their efforts to keep it on a relatively even keel. They knew they were making good progress toward that unknown point to the north where they hoped to strike land, but they had no time to estimate their rate of speed or their direction, except that it was vaguely to the north. Whenever a lull occurred, it was necessary to bail out the water they were constantly shipping aboard.

It was when one of the men stepped on Ann's foot as he leaped to the opposite side of the raft to balance it that she was roused into consciousness of what was happening. The pain seemed to clear her head and she remembered almost immediately what she had wanted to do when she fainted. She felt strangely light; almost as though her body had no substance and could move without effort on her part. It was no trouble at all to pull herself up on the edge of the raft now; she understood what was required of her, what she could do to help the others.

She felt the wind catch at her and, if it had not been for Phillips who sat beside her, she might have fallen backward into the outer darkness of the sea and mist.

"Thanks," she gasped. The wind caught the word and

hurled it away from her, as though eager to grasp at anything in its path. She closed her mouth tightly and bent forward against the gale, clinging with all her strength to the slippery surface of the raft. Suddenly, with a force that threw her to her knees, the raft struck something and the next instant had overturned, tossing its occupants into a boiling sea of waves and foam. Ann was thrown against a sharp rock and reached out instinctively to clutch at it, to find something firm and steady to hang onto in this chaotic world. Her hands slid off its slippery surface and a great wave lifted her as though she were a piece of driftwood. She felt herself carried forward, turned, twisted, and tumbled by the breaking wave. Then, like a plaything of which the sea had grown tired, she was thrown down and abandoned on a rough hard surface.

She did not lose consciousness, though she could not move. She had been so knocked about and flung down so violently that every breath was gone from her lungs. The struggle to regain the power of breathing was all that she was capable of now. Gradually her breath came more regularly, and with it the tremendous consciousness that she was on land, that there was a firm surface beneath her instead of an uncertain and treacherous body of water. This knowledge was so exhilarating that she dragged herself to a sitting position and began to pull away from the waves that broke just beyond her feet.

She heard voices, the sound of shouting, and suddenly Phillips' quick command, "Quiet, everybody quiet!"

The noise stilled instantly. "Listen, everybody." Phillips' voice held a hushed insistency. "We don't know where we are; there may be Japs near. Can you hear me, can everybody hear me? I'm going to call a muster."

There was a murmured response. Then Phillips began to call the names of those who had been aboard the raft. Ann's name was first and the sound of her cracked reply startled her. She listened to the other responses with pain-

ful eagerness, repeating the names after him within her own thoughts. All but two replied.

"Come toward me," said Phillips next. "We want to keep together."

It was too dark to see anything, but following the sound of his voice Ann crawled over the rocks, scraping her hands and knees on the sharp projections and tearing her clothing. He was not far from her, but even when she could reach out and touch Phillips' arm, she could not see him through the choking fog.

The survivors were gathered about him within a few minutes. The raft had overturned just offshore and all its occupants had been thrown almost on the same spot on the rocks.

"Anyone hurt?"

From the replies, Ann gathered that all of them had sustained cuts and bruises of some sort. She thought of the first-aid kit and wondered if it would be washed up on the beach. It was too dark to do anything for any of them now, but the first-aid kit began to worry her.

"Okay, now listen. We'll try to find the other two guys. They probably were knocked out, hit a rock or something. Two of you, Larson and Rosman, strike out on either side of us. Kept within hail. Crawl along and see if you don't come on them. The rest stay here and keep quiet."

The two men had been gone only a few minutes when a faint cry to the right of them proved that one of the missing men had been found.

"Someone lend a hand." The call came faintly on the wind.

Phillips responded and it was some time before he and Rosman reappeared, carrying a man between them.

"He's out," Ann heard someone say. "But he's breathing."

She pushed forward to where the man lay and groped for his wrist. His pulse was weak, but proof enough that he

was alive. "I wish I had a light," she exclaimed. "I can't do anything for him in the dark."

"We'll have to wait for morning," said Phillips. "Even if we had a light we wouldn't dare show it. I wonder if Larson found the other one." Almost as though the mention of his name had called him back, they heard his voice just beside them.

"Found him," he said briefly. "It was Grier; could tell by feeling his head. It's bald, you know, and—"

"Well?" Phillips' impatient question cut him off short.

"He's dead. Must have hit his head on a rock; it's all—"

"Never mind that!" Phillips' anger expressed his feeling for the loss of one of his men better than the silence of the others. "Now listen," he went on after a moment, "we've got to stay right here until morning. Tomorrow we'll do what there is left for us to do for Grier. Now we'll get a little farther inshore, but we've got to stick together and keep our mouths shut."

Ann crawled on her hands and knees with the others away from the sea. It was obvious that they had struck upon a section of coastline that was entirely free of sand, for the surface was made up of the same jagged rocks she had hit upon when she first found herself on dry land. Phillips seemed to be feeling for a place that would offer some shelter, for she heard him call a halt just as her hand struck a rock rising above her.

"We'll stay here," he announced.

They group themselves about him beneath the rock and a strange silence fell over them. They dared not talk, yet all of them wanted to discuss their situation. A hundred questions and speculations occurred to Ann, yet she was forbidden to utter them. It was an agony to force herself to sit quietly when there was so much she wanted to know of Phillips' plans and opinions of their future course of action. She knew they must be somewhere on the west coast of Luzon, but how far north the wind had carried them

she could not estimate. They might even be on the Bataan peninsula. The idea offered food for thought, and the weeks she had spent there just three years previously flashed across her memory with a new meaning. Perhaps she had come back; she had always dreamed of the day she would return to Bataan, but, never in her wildest thoughts, had she imagined landing as she had now.

It began to rain soon after they were settled about the base of the rock, a steady downpour that seemed determined to keep on forever. No one remarked on it; they did not have to express the joy that the rain brought to them. It was water, fresh water, and all of them felt that they could never absorb enough of it. Ann let it pour over her and cupped her hands to catch enough to drink. She lost the enervating sense of weakness that had weighed upon her; each drop of rain seemed to give her new strength and hope.

None of them slept that night; they were too excited to rest, too anxious to know what they might see in the morning. Until they could decide where they were, whether there were any Jap soldiers near by, and what sort of terrain they had struck upon, they could make no plans.

Shortly before dawn the rain stopped as abruptly as it had begun, and gradually the atmosphere about them grew lighter. The fog lifted with the rising sun, driven off by the still powerful wind that swept in from the sea. They saw then where they were: at the base of a rocky mountain spur that came down to the sea. But it was not the mountain that held their attention. Off to the right of them, not a hundred yards distant, was a long white stretch of sand, gleaming in the rays of the rising sun. Behind it was a thick tangle of jungle trees, a dark line behind the narrow beach.

"Well, I'll be—" Phillips did not finish. They all knew what he meant. If they had landed on the beach instead of on the rocks, their raft would not have been wrecked and their comrade would not have been killed. What diabolic

piece of luck had sent them ashore on this spur of rock?

They did not move for several minutes; they could not take their eyes from that smooth, safe surface of sand just beyond them. Then Phillips got to his feet. "You and Larson," he told Rosman, "come with me. We'll bury Grier beyond the beach." The three men left and, while they were gone, Ann and the others said almost nothing. Their thoughts for their lost comrade were too deep for words.

"I'm going to have a looksee," said Phillips, when he returned. "If there aren't any Nips near the beach, we can hide out in that jungle until we see where we are. We're like sitting ducks here on the rocks; we've got to get to cover." He did not speak of Grier, and by common consent the others tried to forget his tragic death.

He was gone for some time, a period that seemed endless to those left behind. They began to talk now, but kept their voices low. It was obvious that they were alone on the rock, but a nervous dread of what might lie out of sight or sound kept them in a state of apprehension. Ann did not join in the talk; she was trying desperately to discover if this land were in any way familiar. She felt that she should know if they were on the Bataan peninsula, but none of this terrain was like anything she had seen there. They must be farther up the coast, she decided.

Phillips returned at long last and motioned them to follow him. Two of the men carried the man who had been knocked unconscious in the landing over the rocks toward the beach. He was conscious now, and Ann had already discovered that his leg was broken. Until she found in the jungle something with which to make a splint, she could not help him.

"No Japs that I can see. Looks as though we're the first human beings to strike this part of the coast," said Phillips, when they reached the beach. "There's a big banyan tree just at the edge of the sand and that's got to be our shelter until something better turns up." He spoke cheerfully, and

Ann knew that he was already beginning to plan some way of getting them all back to safety. In this desolate spot she could not imagine what he saw to give him such a hope, but her confidence in him was boundless.

They reached the shelter of the great tree, whose strangely formed roots made a cool retreat. But before Ann bothered to inspect the place Phillips had chosen for a hideout, she turned to look about for some sticks she might use for a splint. The others did not notice for a time that she had wandered away from them. They were busy cleaning out the rank undergrowth from beneath the tree roots in order to make room for all of them within its shelter.

The jungle trees grew so thickly that Ann had to force her way through them, pushing aside great overhanging branches and vines and paying little heed to anything but the necessity of finding some suitable sticks of wood. There were plenty about, but they were green and resisted all her efforts to break them. She tripped several times and fell, only to scramble to her feet, covered with dirt and green slime from the damp and dripping growth. Her slack suit was by this time only a ragged, soiled piece of cloth that by some miracle held together at the seams. She no longer gave her appearance a thought and was so accustomed to her bedraggled clothing that it did not seem strange to her.

She had found one stick, and then just ahead of her she saw another, a short branch of a tree which had fallen to the ground. It would be perfect if it could be broken to the right lengths. She leaned down to pick it up and at that moment heard a slight rustling in the underbrush to the right. She whirled about and caught an instant's glimpse of a face. A wave of terror gripped her, freezing her to the spot. It was a brown face, with the skin drawn tight over the cheekbones. But it was not the color of this face that held her in breathless horror. It was the eyes; they were long and slanted upward slightly at the outer corners. She only saw it for a second; then it was gone and there was

nothing, no whisper of sound to show where it had disappeared.

10

THE second the face disappeared Ann started to run back toward the place where she had left the others. She paid no heed to the roots and branches that got in her way; she was scarcely conscious that she fell sprawling to the ground countless times. Her once-white slack suit was torn and black with dirt even before her headlong flight from the terror that lurked in the jungle behind her; before she had gone ten feet, it was hardly recognizable as a piece of clothing. All she knew or felt was that she must escape, must get as far as possible from that place where she had seen the face.

The others must have realized that something had happened to frighten her, for she saw Phillips coming toward her before she reached the banyan tree. He looked at her with open amazement and then ran forward to grip her by the shoulder. His action saved her from another fall, and for a long moment she could only let him support her while she stared up at him, her breath coming in tearing sobs.

"What is it? What happened?" His voice was urgent, but he still maintained the air of calm that had helped her so often before.

Ann could only gasp, but she pointed back toward the jungle and tried to indicate with her hand all the horror that was concealed there.

"Take it easy, Miss Bartlett." Phillips put his arm across her shoulders and led her toward the tree. The action was that of a friend who wished to help and comfort her in any

way he could, and suddenly Ann realized how much he had done for all of them in the past days. He was a little man, thin and insignificant in appearance; she had only known him by name during the time she had been aboard the *Sea Haven*. Yet now it was as though she had known him all her life; their recent trials had proved that he was a man anyone would be proud to call a friend.

The thought, irrelevant as it might be under her present stress of mind, had a strangely quieting effect upon her. Her thoughts cleared and some of that blind sense of terror left her. Now it was important to her that she prove to Phillips that even the sight of a Jap face in the jungle could not unnerve her. She drew herself up and took a long unsteady breath.

"I'll be all right. Look here, Phillips, stop a minute. Perhaps it would be best not to tell the others, but back there when I was looking for sticks to make a splint for—for—"

"His name is Vannelli," said Phillips.

"Well, I heard a noise in the bushes and I—I saw—" She caught her breath as the memory of that dark face returned.

"Yes?"

"A face." Ann spoke through tightened lips. "It must have been a Jap because his eyes were slanted."

She heard Phillips' sharp exclamation, then she hurriedly told how the face had disappeared. He said nothing for a moment, then he turned and went quickly back to the tree where the other men waited. Ann stumbled along behind him, wondering whether he would tell what she had seen. She saw that they had cleared a space between the gnarled and twisted roots and that Vannelli had been placed within their shelter.

"—and so we will have to move along," she heard Phillips saying as she reached the spot. "The little snooper has probably gone back to tell his friends about us. We'll have to find another hide-out. But first Miss Bartlett's going to

set your leg." Phillips knelt down beside Vannelli and grinned at him as though there were nothing for him to worry about.

Ann took her cue from him and stepped forward. She still held the little bundle of sticks in one hand, and now it seemed extraordinary that she had clung to them during her flight. As she knelt down beside the wounded man she heard the others talking, but their words scarcely meant anything to her. She knew they were discussing what she had seen, but now that brief glimpse of a hostile face seemed to have no relation to an experience of hers. It had become everyone's concern and, unconsciously, she and the others were looking to Phillips to decide what their next move would be.

She had already examined Vannelli's broken leg and found to her vast relief that it was a simple break of the tibia. With one of the men to help her set the bone, she felt fairly certain that she could bind a splint that would hold it in place.

"Will one of you break these sticks to the right lengths?" she asked. Her voice surprised her; it was quiet and unemotional, just the tone she used when on duty in the hospital. She showed Rosman, who was the first to reach her side, the lengths she needed and then beckoned to Phillips.

"You sit by him where he can see you, will you?" she said in a whisper. "Keep talking to him, you know how. This is going to hurt."

Phillips nodded and began to talk in an undertone to Vannelli. Later Ann remembered that never once in the minutes that followed, minutes that must have seemed hours to Vannelli, did he take his eyes from Phillips' face. She could not hear what Phillips said, but she saw the expression on Vannelli's face and did not need to hear the words. Rosman helped her pull the bone into position; under her direction he held it there while she padded the splints with strips of cloth from the men's blouses. They

had all offered them as bandaging, and with this same cloth she made a long length to bind the splint firmly into place. It did not take long, and she was glad when it was done. She had done her best and was reasonably certain that the bone was set correctly.

Vannelli's face was white and wet with perspiration when it was over, and she wished she had something from the lost first-aid kit to ease his pain.

"Why didn't I hang on to it?" she asked aloud. "It was the one thing on the raft that we really need now."

"You mean the first-aid kit or the water purifier?" asked Phillips. "We could do with fresh water. No stream near here that I can see. A good reason for us to move on; we'll have to find water. Now, look here, all of you, we're going to check out of here. We'll strike out to the right of us here toward that mountain we hit on. More chance of water there, and the terrain is too rough to make it a place the Nips are apt to hang out in."

"Unless they've set up machine-gun emplacements on the high rocks," said Rosman. "Good place to overlook this section of the coast."

Phillips nodded. "You're right about that, but we'll have to chance it for the sake of water. They can't be everywhere—not even those little monkeys. Rosman, you and Larson carry Vannelli between you chair fashion. I'll lead the way, Miss Bartlett right behind me, then you two carrying Vannelli. Walters, you bring up the rear and keep your eyes peeled."

Except for Vannelli, they had no burden to carry. There was nothing left from the raft that they could take with them to their unknown destination. They started out, following Phillips who went slowly and cautiously ahead of his little band of survivors. Ann walked behind him, holding branches and vines to one side to make progress easier for those who carried Vannelli. This was her job; she had no chance to look or listen for sight or sound in the vast

and choking jungle which closed in about them. It was as though she were walking through a darkened room, a room where some lurking danger waited. Every leaf that touched her seemed to be a warning of this unknown presence; she was stiff with a deadening fear of what might spring out from behind any of these giant trees or clumps of tangled bushes. At any other time she might have thought this flowering forest, this riot of greenery, a beautiful sight. But now it was horrible; a threat, for it seemed to hide the enemy from them, to protect him until he was ready to spring out at them.

Phillips had cautioned them not to speak, and the silence was an added burden to Ann. It made each snap of the twigs underfoot, each rustle of the branches overhead, doubly loud and terrifying. She was startled so often by the sudden snap or creak of a branch that her muscles ached from her efforts not to jump and show her fear.

They had been walking over an hour, stopping often to rest, when Phillips turned suddenly and exclaimed: "See those!" His tense whisper betrayed excitement and Ann looked up, in an ecstasy of alarm, to see him pointing toward a shrub about three feet high, a plant with long stems and large heart-shaped leaves. It seemed completely uninteresting to Ann and she stared at Phillips, wondering why it should mean so much to him.

"Taro," he said briefly. "Roots are good eating. It's the first thing I've seen that the book said was edible."

Ann had almost forgotten what it was to eat or even think of food. Now, unappetizing as these violently green leaves looked, she knew that this plant was as important to them as water. But she was puzzled by his reference to a book until she remembered the little paper-bound volume he had studied so assiduously aboard the raft.

"I wish we had that now," she whispered. "Didn't you go look for any of the things on the beach?"

Phillips nodded. He was already busy about the roots of

the taro plant, wrenching at the tough stems, which seemed determined to resist all his efforts to break them.

"Had a look while you were on your little expedition. No sign of the raft or anything. Must have floated off with the tide in the night. Here!" he tossed a dirty round object toward Walters, who had come forward to help him. It was encrusted with damp earth, and the hairy tendrils clinging to it made it seem larger than it actually was. He dug several of the roots from the wet soil before he was satisfied that he had found all of them.

Ann noticed that the trees grew less thickly where they were now, and just ahead, through a screen of bushes, she saw what seemed to be a relatively clear area. She pointed it out to Phillips and he nodded.

"This must have been cultivated land once," he said. "Taro is a cultivated plant. Shouldn't wonder if there isn't an abandoned native village near by—perhaps beyond those bushes. If it is, we're in luck!"

"You mean we could use some of the native houses?"

Phillips grinned. "Water, Miss Bartlett, water. There's bound to be a stream somewhere near here, if there was a village over there. Come on, Walters. We'll take a look."

The two men carrying Vannelli sat down to rest and Ann went toward them to see how the wounded man was standing the trip. He was obviously in great pain, but he refused to admit the fact, even though his face was gray with suffering. The splints were still in place and, knowing she could do nothing to ease the pain, Ann could only wish again that she had her medical kit with her. A morphine shot would mean so much to him now.

"Think the boss is going to camp here?" asked Larson. "We must be pretty far inland now, and it doesn't look as though any Nips had been hanging around."

As though in answer to his question, Phillips returned at that moment and beckoned them forward. "We've found it," he said with such satisfaction in his tone that

no one needed to ask him what he meant. There was obviously fresh water near the clearing, and the thought gave new hope to all of them. They saw it just beyond the clearing, a small quick-running stream that wound its way between muddy banks, so thickly overgrown that one could not see the water through the tangle of bushes. The clearing itself was covered with coarse grass that grew almost waist-high and concealed nearly all traces of what once must have been a small village. There were occasional heaps of rotting woven palm that bore little resemblance to the native huts that had at one time been scattered about the clearing. It seemed almost more desolate than the primitive forest, this forgotten village that had been abandoned to the encroaching jungle growth.

"We'll camp here," announced Phillips. "If the Japs haven't been here before, and there's no evidence they have, there's no reason to think they'll show up now. We'll be as safe as anywhere until we decide what we can do; and we're near water. Plenty more of this taro around too." He gestured toward a group of the tall plants.

When they had all satisfied their thirst at the stream, they gathered around Phillips, who was sitting on a heap of dried palm leaves staring at a grove of the giant coconut palms at the edge of the clearing. The fronds grew at the top of the trees at what seemed a tremendous distance from the ground. They did not need to ask why he was looking at them or why he was frowning in the way he was.

"Who's got a knife?" he demanded suddenly. "As a matter of fact, who saved anything out of the wreck? We'll pool what we've got."

Ann had nothing but two bobby pins and a handkerchief, which she found rolled in the pocket of her slacks, to contribute to the little pile of articles that were tossed at Phillips' feet. But there were two case knives, a small metal case containing matches, and several lengths of string. It

was pathetic evidence of how little the sea had allowed them to keep of their personal possessions. Only two of the men had blouses, for the others had been torn to make the bandages for Vannelli. What clothing remained to them was ragged and soiled beyond recognition. Ann looked at the men grouped near their leader and wondered if she, too, had grown to look so old. With their bearded faces, and the marks of near starvation and suffering that lined them, all of the men seemed several years older than they had aboard the *Sea Haven*. She knew her clothing was as torn and dirty as theirs, and she had only to put her hand to her head to feel the snarled and knotted curls that covered it.

Then, as she studied her companions, she was suddenly ashamed of her thoughts. What difference did it make how she or any of them looked? There was an expression in the eyes and about the mouths of the men near her that showed the determination and courage that animated them. They had made up their minds to suffer anything in the hope of coming through alive; the hope of some day, somehow, returning home.

Phillips shrugged as he looked at the small heap of salvage before him and then grinned. "Could be worse. With matches and a couple of knives we can get along pretty well. First thing is to light a fire and cook some of these roots. We'll have to roast them."

It was an easy matter to make a heap of dried grasses and sticks and get a small fire started. Phillips explained that they must try to preserve the coals to save matches and that they must bank the fire at night for fear of its being seen by the enemy.

"We can bank it easily enough with fresh palm leaves. Speaking of palms, we'll have to shinny up those trees over there and get some of the fronds to build a shelter. First we eat, though."

The taro roots had been washed in the stream and were

soon buried beneath the growing heap of coals. They busied themselves in finding sticks and branches to keep the fire going, grateful for some occupation that passed the time of waiting for the roots to be done. These were poked at so often with sharpened sticks to test them that, when at last Phillips pronounced them edible, the roots were considerably battered.

Ann looked at the black and smoking root that was handed to her on the end of a stick and wondered how she could bring herself to eat it. But Phillips showed them how to peel the roots, and the whitish stuff beneath the tough outer fiber looked more appetizing. It had a bitter taste, but, after several bites, Ann grew accustomed to it and found it almost easy to eat. No one talked as they ate, and it wasn't until they had all consumed two or three of the roots that anyone made any comment on their new diet.

"Boiled dishrag and horseradish, with just the merest pinch of arsenic. That's what I'd say this tastes like," said Larson. "Hand me another."

"We'll find some other stuff," said Phillips. "You can eat grass if you'd rather. The book said so."

"You and your book. Wish I'd had a look at it so I'd know I'm not being poisoned."

"You'll find that out soon enough and you won't need a book either. Come on, Larson, you and I are going up and cut some of those palm fronds. Miss Bartlett, you stay here with Vannelli and get under the shade of those bushes. The rest can scout around for more food. Look for bamboo shoots and sugar cane. If you see a plant that looks like a morning glory vine, it's sweet potato, so dig it up. All those things grow near where there's been cultivated land."

Ann fell asleep under the shade of the tree, after Vannelli had succumbed to the same overpowering desire for rest. Once he was sleeping soundly, she relaxed her

vigilance and soon had followed suit. It was evening when she awoke. The sunlight had faded from the clearing and now only a faint glow from the sky lighted the dusky area. Immediately Ann wished that she had stayed awake to help the others, for she saw how hard they had been working while she slept. A small lean-to shelter had been built in the shade of the palms, well-concealed among the bushes in the little grove. The fire had been moved to a position nearer the shelter, and she saw the figures of the four men bending over it; they were evidently cooking something.

She got to her feet slowly, for every bone in her body seemed to protest her moving, and went toward them. As she got nearer she saw that a second shelter had been built a little distance from the other.

"Why didn't you wake me up?" she demanded. "I should have done something. You've done everything."

"Even to building ladies' quarters," replied Phillips, ignoring her question. He waved toward the smaller shelter. "How's Vannelli?"

"Still sleeping. I didn't want to wake him."

"We'll save some supper for him. The boys found sugar cane and bamboo as I thought they might. We're having quite a feast tonight. Hurry up with it, Walters. We've got to bank the fire soon." He glanced up at the sky and then at the brightly glowing fire.

As soon as Walters pronounced the meal ready, they covered the fire and ate in complete darkness. The tropic night had come down upon them, blotting out everything within their immediate field of vision. Far above them, through the palm leaves, they caught the faint glimmer of stars against the deep blue of the sky.

Suddenly Ann felt strangely peaceful; it did not seem so impossible now to hope that they would live through what lay before them. They had food and shelter; eventually they could find safety.

But she was not destined to keep this false sense of security. She had fallen asleep in her shelter around midnight, and the blast of sound that awakened her some time later effectively shattered all sense of peace. She knew what it was; she did not need Phillips' shout of "Planes, our planes!" to tell her that a section of the coast to the north of them was being bombarded. The earth-shaking explosion of bombs made the ground tremble, and even though she knew what caused the shuddering detonation, it was frightening. The noise of bombardment kept up for over an hour and the silence that followed seemed more nerve-wracking than the burst of bombs.

"Where were we bombing?" she asked Phillips. They were standing together in the center of the clearing, staring up at the patch of sky overhead, hoping to catch a glimpse of the planes.

He shook his head. "Up along the coast somewhere. I wish I knew where we were exactly. On Luzon of course, but it's a big island. You remember my mentioning the cumulus clouds last evening?"

It seemed an age ago, but Ann remembered.

"The book said they sometimes hung over land. I didn't want to give anyone a bum steer, but I thought we'd strike land soon."

Ann went back to her shelter and, though no further bombardment disturbed her that night, it took her a long time to fall asleep again. She listened to the small, rustling night noises of the jungle and could not make herself believe that only a week ago she had been safe aboard the *Sea Haven*. What lay before her, before all of them? Would they come out of this alive or would they all die in this lonely jungle? She went to sleep at last with very little to give her reason for comfort.

In the two days that followed, Ann became more and more uncertain of the future or what it might bring. She wondered why Phillips stayed there, why he did not go on.

He seemed to be waiting for something to happen. They had plenty to eat and drink and had seen no further sign of the enemy. They had improved the shelters until they were much like the nipa palm huts of the natives which she had seen on Bataan. Twice more, once at night and once in the daytime, they heard the earth-shattering sound of bombardment to the north of them, but they became accustomed to the noise. Although they never saw the planes, they knew they were American aircraft and that they were bombarding the Japanese shore installations as they had been in recent weeks.

Several times in these two days the men discussed the possibility of building a raft and floating it downstream to the sea. "If we get any kind of weather, we could get right across the mouth of Manila Bay and hit on Mindoro. Our troops ought to have that island pretty well in hand now." It was Larson who spoke. He was the most restless of the group, and each hour of inactivity in the camp made him more and more anxious to be on the move. They had just finished a morning meal of taro root and sugar cane, a diet that had become sickeningly familiar to all of them.

Larson threw a section of sugar cane into the fire and got to his feet. "Why don't we get a move on, Phillips?" There was a note of tension in his voice that betrayed how near he was to the breaking point.

Phillips glanced at him and then said quietly, "Sit down, Larson. I'll tell you why we're staying here." He waited until Larson sat down once more. Then he looked at the circle of faces turned in his direction. He grinned at Vannelli, who sat propped up against a log. Ann sat near him, for he was her responsibility, and her chief duty was to care for him.

"Feeling better?" Phillips asked him.

"Sure, fine. I hope—" He hesitated, then said quickly, "I hope you aren't staying here on my account. I could get along okay."

"That's not the reason," said Phillips. "I wasn't going to tell you because I didn't want to get your hopes up, if my idea came to nothing. You remember the guy Miss Bartlett saw back there?"

Ann nodded with the others, too surprised to speak. What could that Jap have to do with Phillips' plan?

"He might not have been a Jap at all," said Phillips. "You've heard of the Filipino guerrillas? Lots of the Filipinos look like Japs. If that guy had been a Jap, he and the rest of his friends would have been after us by now. I'm hoping it was a guerrilla and that he's gone to bring help."

At that instant a sound came from the direction of the stream. The same thought was in everyone's mind, a thought that Phillips last words put there. A moment later it came again. It was the sound of voices. Were these voices of the enemy or of the guerrillas whom Phillips had hoped might come to their rescue?

Without waiting for a command from Phillips, Larson and Rosman picked up Vannelli and carried him toward a thick screen of bushes that grew along the water's edge. It was the best cover in the vicinity and a spot they had chosen beforehand in case it became necessary to hide. The others followed, moving so quickly that they were all concealed within a minute after the first warning of danger.

They waited motionless for what seemed an endless period of time. There was no further sound downstream from where the voices had come. Only the soft trickling murmur of the water just beyond their retreat broke the silence; that and a buzz of insects in the air above them. It was an unearthly quiet that seemed to hold a threat of the unknown. Ann had been unconsciously holding her breath; now she let it out slowly. She saw Phillips begin to crawl cautiously toward the water and knew he was going to see if anyone was coming upstream. This quiet did not

seem possible; it was too deep. No one could move on the water and not make some sound.

Phillips reached the edge of the bank, not ten feet from where the others waited, and parted the screening branches noiselessly. They all saw the Jap patrol boat at the same moment. It was right before them, just beyond the bank. It was as though the boat and its four occupants had flashed across a motion-picture screen; the complete scene was imprinted on everyone's consciousness in the second that passed before Phillips let the branches fall back into place.

It was as silent as before. The boat was sliding so slowly over the water that it made no sound. No one moved a muscle. Ann felt her breath caught in her throat; all she could think was that Phillips' hope had come to nothing. It was a Jap she had seen after all. Now he had come back with others to look for them. Not ten yards beyond the spot where they were hiding was an open space on the bank. From here the Japs could see right into their camp. It would not need more than one look at the shelters to tell the Japs that their search was ended.

11

IF only they were making some sound; if only the four men were not so deathly quiet! It was as though they were ghosts, phantoms from another world, moving as they did so slowly, so silently over the water. For a moment Ann wondered if that instant's glimpse of the patrol boat and its occupants had been seen in a dream, if she had imagined their presence. She had not moved a muscle in

the few minutes that had elapsed since that terrifying sight. Unconsciously she had closed her eyes as though to blot the image from her mind. Now she opened them and stared at her companions as though seeking some hope or consolation from them. It was true; there were Japs in the narrow river. She had only to look at the men near her to know that.

They were looking at one another just as Ann was staring at them, and the same question was in everyone's eyes. Would the Japs know as soon as they saw the camp that their search was ended? It was impossible to hope that they would not see the two shelters and the remains of the fire. There was food there, too; freshly dug taro root and a heap of sugar cane and bamboo shoots—evidence enough for anyone that the camp had been recently occupied. What could they do, where could they go to escape the enemy? Ann's fears were mounting to a panic. They were caught; the Japs would find them. They had nowhere to go to escape them. Just beyond the thick clump of bushes in which they were hiding was an open stretch of grassland in the center of which was the clump of palms where their camp was situated. The jungle trees surrounding the open space were more than two hundred feet from the bank of the stream; there was no hope of their making a dash for cover in the jungle. They must stay where they were in the precarious safety that the bushes offered.

Ann turned her head slowly until she could look at Phillips. She noticed that the others were waiting, too, to take their cue from him. If he wanted to make a try at getting across the grass in the few moments left to them before the Japs reached the cleared area on the bank, they were willing to do so, no matter how impossible such an effort might seem.

Then she saw him shake his head. His lips formed the one word, "No."

She heard one of the men beside her draw in his breath

deeply, then a voice, Vannelli's voice, said softly, "Go ahead, go on all of you. It's your only chance. You'll never make it with me. I'll be hidden here."

"Shut up!" It was a command, but one spoken so gently that it was more a term of affectionate rebuke. "None of us could make it. We've got one chance and that's to stay here and not move a finger. Lie down flat all of you and try to pull branches or grass over you."

A hoarse shout came from somewhere upstream. The Japs had seen the camp. Instantly the silence was broken by a quick jabber of talk. They heard the sound of the pole that had propelled the boat up the narrow stream as it was thrown down and then the scramble of feet getting out of the boat. The sight of the camp seemed to unloose the tongues of the Japs and to break the need of caution. There was no mistaking the note of triumph in their voices, even though all they said was completely unintelligible.

Ann felt that every drop of blood had been drained from her veins. If an ax had been poised over her head she could have been no more certain that her end had come. She had no illusions as to her fate at the hands of the Japs; they were merciless killers and would not hesitate a second to do away with all of them, unless— She remembered tales of Jap torture and a new wave of horror swept over her. If she should faint, if she should lose all sense of the necessity of silence and cry out while she was unconscious, it would mean the end for all of them. She dug her nails into her palms until they broke the skin. The pain revived her; she must not faint; she must never for one second lose sight of the terrible reality that faced them.

She clenched her teeth and, taking advantage of the noise the Japs were making so near them, rolled farther beneath the bush that hid her. The others had done the same thing, and now each of them had done his best to conceal himself. They lay absolutely flat, and not even the

sound of their breathing betrayed their presence. Ann's terror made her breath come in short gasps and she forced herself to breathe more slowly and evenly. The effort had the effect of calming her as well as making her less likely to betray herself. She lay with her face buried in her hands, every muscle in her body tense with listening.

The Japs had left the boat now, and their footsteps could be heard swishing through the long grass toward the camp. One of them shouted something, evidently an order, for immediately a short silence followed. The voice said something, and a moment later an explosion shook the ground. It came so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that Ann started up, almost lifting herself on her elbows. She felt a hand push her head down and a second later she lay quiet once more, deeply ashamed of her involuntary action.

"Grenadel!" The word came in a faint whisper from Phillips. "They aren't taking any chances."

Ann knew then that the Japs had tossed a grenade into the center of the camp and could picture the devastation it had caused. Not one leaf or branch that had formed the two shelters would be left; all the work that had gone into making the shelters livable had been blown to shreds in a matter of seconds. Suddenly she was thankful that the few tools they owned had not been left in the camp; the knives and matches were in Phillips' possession and had escaped the Jap grenade.

The echoes of the explosion died away and another brief silence followed. Evidently the Japs were waiting to see whether their grenade had done the work they hoped. They were quiet only a moment, however, for they must have seen almost at once that they had done damage only to two empty huts. An angry exchange of words followed, then once again the harsh voice of command rose above the others. It said in a strange clipped accent, "You come out now. You hide. No hope to save yourself."

Ann felt herself stiffen. What made the Jap commander know they were near? Then she knew. The ashes of the fire were warm. It would be obvious to anyone that the camp had been recently occupied. None of them moved. They were, if possible, more silent, more motionless, than before.

The Jap repeated his order again, this time embellishing it with several ill-chosen expletives, so mispronounced that Ann felt a wild, uncontrollable desire to laugh. She cramped her fingers into her mouth and pressed her face into the ground. It was hysteria, she knew it was, but she must not let it betray them.

By the time she had gained control of herself once more, the noise of talking had broken out again in the camp. She could hear the men walking around, evidently searching the edge of the jungle for them. One pair of footsteps came their way; the Jap was walking heavily and swishing at the tall grass about him with something that was probably a rifle. The next moment the muzzle of that rifle jabbed the ground not three inches from Ann's face. The Jap was using it to prod the bushes in search of them. He stood not two feet from her just beside the bush, and she could hear the sound of his rasping breath. Then the rifle was withdrawn and it clattered through the bushes to one side of her. How was it possible that he did not see them? They could not be so well-hidden that a man standing just over them would not discover them.

Then she knew the reason. Without seeing him she knew why he was so blind. The sound of voices had been so continuous in the last few moments that she had not realized that the man near her was talking also. He was shouting something at his companions, and she understood that he was looking at the man to whom he was talking and letting his rifle act as his eyes, using it to feel in the bushes without watching what he was doing. It was stupid, incredibly stupid, but it saved their lives. The man made

a few more ineffective stabs at the bushes, thrust at the ground a couple of times, missing them by inches, and then walked on a few feet to repeat the performance. He was still talking, and the sound of his voice grew steadily fainter as he progressed up the bank in his fruitless search.

"Thank God!" The words were no more than a breath. Ann did not know who said them, but they echoed the thought in her own mind. They were a prayer of thanksgiving.

From the direction of the camp the commander spoke again in Japanese. He sounded angry, and it did not take any knowledge of the language to know that he was swearing at his men, blaming them for not finding their victims. Evidently he called his men to him, for they could hear the sound of footsteps going toward the clump of palms. Then a long harangue followed, broken occasionally by a word or two from one of the men. These interruptions were greeted with a fresh burst of imprecations, and the leader made short work of what must have been objections to his orders. Once there was a sound that might have been a rifle butt striking against bone; there was a sharp outcry and another curt command. It did not take the leader long to make his arrangements or for those hidden so near to understand what they were.

A flare of firelight and the crackle of burning wood told them that the Jap commander intended to stay at the camp. Any vague hope they had cherished that the Japs would go away immediately was doomed to a quick death. Every sound that came their way told that the Japs were preparing to remain where they were. A faint odor of cooking wafted over them, the familiar smell of charred taro root and the sickish smell of burning sugar cane which the Japs must be using as firewood.

"Blast them!" It was Phillips speaking in a whisper. "Heaven knows how long they'll stay. No matter what

happens, no one move. We've been lucky so far—don't take any chances now."

No one replied. No matter how far out of sound of a whisper the Japs might be, Ann could not forget the horror of the time when the Jap soldier had stood so near her. He seemed to be standing by her now and she dared not move to show she had heard and understood Phillips' order. She lay as she had been lying for what seemed to be a lifetime, her head buried in her hands, her feet resting against the prickly roots of the protecting bush above her. The sharp branches dug into her ankles, but the pain meant nothing to her. A tiny insect crawled over her instep, but she dared not move to dislodge him. Through her fingers she could see a small army of red ants parading just under her nose. One crawled up to investigate her right hand and several more joined him. Still she did not move. Any breath, any sound in the air about her, sent new waves of stifling fear to her heart. Always she was conscious of the Japs, and every word they spoke or sound they made rang in her ears like the toll of a funeral bell. Between them was only a screen of bushes and an open stretch of grass.

Often during the long hours that followed Ann felt that she must be visible to the Japs, that they must know where she and the others were and were only biding their time before pouncing on them. It seemed incredible that they could be so near and yet not find them. They knew, when the Japs finished their meal, that they were sitting about the fire, evidently with the intention of staying there. Yet the Japs did not search the ground again for them. Their first investigation had obviously satisfied them that no one was in the vicinity; but still they remained at the camp site.

The sun rose higher into the sky until it stood directly overhead, burning down through the protecting bushes

and making the damp ground beneath them steam like a vapor bath. It was a choking atmosphere that got into Ann's nose and throat and seemed to fill her lungs with its heavy fumes. It became increasingly difficult to breathe, and she could hear the long gasping breaths of the others, proving that they too were affected by the moist, miasmic air. Suddenly she began to worry about Vannelli; this was perfect malaria ground; in his weakened condition he was more in danger of it than the others. She lifted her head slowly and looked at him. He lay nearest to her, his leg in its splint stretched out at an awkward angle. He looked miserably uncomfortable and his face was gray with fatigue.

She stretched out one hand and touched his arm. He jumped so violently that Ann regretted her action instantly; obviously he had been in a sort of coma and thought the Jap soldier had returned.

"It's all right," she breathed. "It's just me. How are you?"

He struggled to recover himself and managed to smile. "I'll be all right. It's just—" But the fright Ann had given him was more powerful than he realized. His head fell forward on the ground and he lost consciousness.

For a moment Ann was horrified that her sympathetic act should have given him such a shock. Then she knew that he was better off than any of them. If this terrible period of waiting for they knew not what could be passed in oblivion, Vannelli was fortunate. The only danger was that he might return to consciousness suddenly and make some sound or motion that would betray their whereabouts. She turned her head so that she could watch him every moment and forestall any inadvertent noise from him.

The sun slid slowly down the western sky, and still the Japs stayed in the palm grove. They did not talk much now, and when they did it was only in whispers. Whether

they were passing the time in a long siesta or were keeping silent in the hope that the men they were looking for would think they had gone, Ann could not decide. But each hissing whisper that came from the camp site sounded in her ears as loudly as a shout.

It was nearly sundown when the Japs suddenly gave up their vigil. The commander said something in a hoarse shout that, after the silence, seemed startlingly loud, and instantly the men began to talk. It needed no knowledge of Japanese to know from their voices that they were relieved that they had received the command to break camp. They were even laughing among themselves as they went quickly to the place where they had left the boat and got into it.

Ann heard the sound of their boots striking against the wood of the boat and, suddenly, a muffled roar. It was the boat engine starting up. Evidently the Japs had decided there was no longer a need for silence and were going to use the engine instead of the pole. She raised her head and her eyes met those of Phillips. They smiled at each other in silent congratulation. They were safe. The Japs had not found them; in another few minutes they would be gone.

At that very moment something sliced through the bush over her head and a reverberating crash shook the silence. Instantly the air about them seemed filled with the sound of rifle fire. Ann knew what it was as that first bullet passed over her. Another hit the ground just beyond her head, sending a spray of dirt and tattered grass into her face. Then she was conscious of something else; Vannelli was moving, the noise had roused him and he was struggling to sit up. With no realization of what she was doing, and acting only on the impulse to keep Vannelli quiet, she lurched forward and with both hands thrust his head down toward the ground.

"Quiet, quiet," she breathed into his ear. She tried to make her voice sound calm, to force him into a realization

of the need for silence. Her heart was pounding and the blood in her eardrums seemed to deafen her with its pulsing.

Vannelli tried to roll away from her, then Phillips rolled over and threw his whole weight across his back.

"Take it easy, boy." His whispered words came to Ann at the very moment that a bullet split through the branches beside her and sliced across her knuckles, missing her head by less than an inch. She stared down at the blood welling up over her hands with a sort of amazed disbelief. She felt nothing, yet that growing stream of blood showed that she had been struck.

"The rotten little—" Ann did not hear the rest of Phillips' words, but she knew what he meant.

"W-why are they—" she very nearly spoke aloud and Phillips hand crushed over her mouth.

"Just making sure they haven't missed anything," he whispered.

The shooting stopped as suddenly as it had begun and now only the sound of the motor, coming nearer, was heard.

"Quiet for your life," Phillips' warning was no more than a breath. No one needed it. They knew the boat would pass down the stream just beyond the screening bushes; that they would be nearer to the enemy in the next moment than at any time during that long day. Only at one time in all those hours had they been nearer danger, and that had been when the Jap soldier had stood so near them and yet not found them.

Ann shut her eyes. The spitting, irregular roar of the motor came nearer, grew to a deafening reverberation in their ears, then gradually, magically, it lessened, grew fainter, fainter, and died into silence. The Japs had gone.

Ann raised her head, looked at Phillips, and to her horror felt tears well into her eyes and run down her cheeks. She gritted her teeth, but she could not stop the

tears. She buried her face in her hands once more and sobbed uncontrollably. Her weeping, instead of increasing the tenseness they all felt, served to loosen it. The sight seemed to relieve them all; it expressed what they all felt: gratitude, pent-up emotion, and thanksgiving at their release. Ann's sobs said more than adequately what everyone felt.

Vannelli, who had recovered full consciousness now, reached out and patted her shoulder. The action calmed her and she drew a deep breath.

"Sorry," she muttered.

"Just what all of us would like to do, I guess," said Phillips cheerfully. "Lucky we have a girl along to do our crying for us."

The remark made Ann laugh and she sat up. She was too stiff to stand immediately and began moving her arms to restore the circulation. She remembered, as her hand struck a branch behind her, that she had been wounded. Fortunately it was merely a break in the skin over the knuckles of one hand, and she quickly bound her tattered handkerchief about her palm. The others were too preoccupied with discussing their extraordinary escape to notice what she did, and Ann was glad. No use, she told herself, to bother anyone with a scratch like this. Her hand hurt, but she soon forgot it in helping Larson get Vannelli to his feet.

They walked out into the open, looking about them as though the familiar clearing and grove of palms were something entirely strange to them. The past hours had shown them how near one could come to death. It had been a soul-shaking experience. It scarcely seemed possible to Ann, as she remembered those fearful hours, that she was alive and free to walk in the open once again.

"They certainly made a mess of the camp," commented Phillips, as they stood surveying the shattered remains of the snug shelters. They had been blown to unrecognizable

bits by the grenade, and now only shreds of the palm matting remained to prove that the shelters had ever existed. "Won't make much difference. We're getting out of here, and quick."

"Where can we go?" Ann's question seemed to hang on the air for a long moment after it was spoken. The others looked at their leader with the same thought in their eyes. Where in all this endless jungle, among these matted grasses and choking trees that seemed to be bearing down on them from all sides, could they find a refuge? What direction could they take that would lead them to safety? And where did safety lie; what was their destination?

"Up into the mountains," said Phillips, after a second's hesitation. "I had a chance to think while those beasts were sitting on top of us. We've got to get farther from the coast. The Japs won't be content with this one search for us. They'll be out for us again with more men most likely."

"But what's the advantage of getting inland? That's no good for us. We've got to keep near the coast." Larson was once again speaking with his former restless impatience.

"Rather have a Jap bullet through you?" snapped Phillips. "You remember what I was saying about guerrillas? They hide out in the mountains. They're our one chance now. We can't build a raft. We wouldn't get ten feet in it with the Japs patrolling the coast. It's too late to get anywhere now before night, so we'll stay here. But at the first crack of daylight we're making tracks that way." He gestured in the general direction of the east where the high looming shadow of a mountain thrust into the sky.

Now that their shelters were gone, the place was desolate and unfriendly. The presence of the Japs seemed to hang over the area like a visible warning of danger, and Ann wondered how she could pass another night in the vicinity. They dared not light a fire and had to content themselves with raw bamboo and sugar cane which the

Japs had obligingly left from their stores. Phillips arranged a series of watches, but would not allow Ann to participate in them.

"We need our nurse to take care of Vannelli," he said with a smile. "You get all the sleep you can." It was the first time he had said that she was not an encumbrance to them, that he was glad to have her with them, and that she could be useful. Those few words were welcome to her and she lay down beneath one of the palm trees feeling oddly comforted. Something would happen to save them from this fantastic existence, from all the impending danger around them. She fell asleep, believing that this must be so; that safety lay somewhere in the future.

It was dawn when she awoke from a heavy, dreamless sleep. But it was not the returning light that had roused her. It was the sound of voices, a loud shout and then a quick exchange of words that had no meaning. She rubbed her eyes and sat up. In the early gray light she saw Phillips standing at the edge of the grove. He was shouting once more.

"Hello, stand back. Who are you?"

That strange voice that she now knew was the one that had awakened her said, "Friend, friend." It spoke with a queer, precise accent that was vaguely familiar to her.

She whirled about and looked in the direction of the voice. Walking slowly toward them in the morning mist was a short, wiry man. He wore a tattered uniform and carried a rifle in one hand. It was the uniform that caught her first horrified attention. She had seen that baggy, ill-fitting sort of uniform before and very recently. It was the Japanese jungle dress, and that rifle—or one like it—had a few short hours before sent bullets crashing in her direction. One had struck her, and slowly, unconsciously, her fingers pressed against the throbbing ache of her hand.

"PHILLIPS!" Ann's voice was a shriek. She shrank back against the palm tree near her, her hands reaching for its smooth trunk for support. With a look of stark horror in her eyes, she watched him step forward toward this newcomer, a man who in her eyes represented all that terror was. But Phillips was walking toward him, his hand outstretched in welcome. Was this a dream, a nightmare?

"Phillips, come back!"

This time her cry reached him. He paused a moment and turned his head toward her.

"Quiet, Ann." It was the first time he had called her by her first name, and she knew that he had done it deliberately now to force her into silence. "This is a friend, one of the guerrillas we have been waiting for."

"Guerrilla, yes!" The man gave the word the Spanish pronunciation and grinned. Suddenly Ann knew why his voice had seemed familiar, and at the same moment a wave of vast relief and confidence swept over her. It was all right; she had acted like a fool; everything would be all right now. How often she had heard men talk with this same accent during the weeks she had spent on Bataan! It was the voice of a native Filipino, that soft, slurred tone, speaking with the Spanish inflection of his ancestors.

The other men walked forward now, leaving Ann and Vannelli within the palm grove. Slowly her hands loosed their grip on the tree. She saw that the men were all talking at once and that the guerrilla was trying to answer the questions they hurled at him.

"How did they know?" Her question was spoken aloud, though she was scarcely conscious of forming the words. Her eyes were so busy with watching the scene before her

that she did not hear Vannelli answer her until she caught the word "uniform."

"Uniform?" She turned to Vannelli with a puzzled frown. "But it's a Jap uniform."

Vannelli laughed. "No self-respecting Jap—if there is such a thing—would go around in a rig like that. Look at it! The pants belong to an aviator's outfit, the puttees are definitely American, and that blouse is part of a Jap infantry regiment. It's all stuff he's scavenged off dead Japs or got from us."

Ann looked at the guerrilla again and saw for the first time how badly his clothes fitted and how mismated they were. "But—" she began doubtfully.

"But he mentioned Captain Lansdale the first words he spoke," finished Vannelli. "Lansdale; everyone knows who he is—the American Army officer who's been on Luzon ever since the Japs got here, organizing the guerrilla outfits. That was what convinced Phillips, that and the guy's grin. No Jap could grin like that and mean it."

Ann remembered Lansdale then, remembered hearing his name mentioned in just the same connection that Vannelli gave it. He was an Army officer who had been left behind when the Americans retreated to Corregidor from Bataan and who ever since had worked among the Filipinos, organizing them in guerrilla bands to sabotage and disrupt the Jap efforts to settle the islands.

Phillips turned away from the group before Ann could say anything further and came toward the grove. "Got your things packed?" he asked. "We're really moving this time and toward a definite place, too."

"Where are we going? How did he find us?" Ann's questions tumbled out in a rush of eager words. She saw that the guerrilla had come forward and was standing near her, looking at her as though he recognized her. He nodded in a friendly way when he saw Ann was staring at him, and suddenly Ann remembered where she had seen him be-

fore. It was the face that had peered out at her from the screen of bushes on the day they had first reached shore. It was the eyes that had frightened her then; they did slant up slightly at the corners, but in her terror she had missed the friendly warmth within those eyes.

"Why did you go away?" she demanded, her voice an accusation. "Why did you leave us here for three whole days?"

She heard Phillips exclamation of astonishment, then the guerrilla's soft reply. "Had to tell boss. Get orders from him. Then there was slight—" He waved his hand expressively toward his rifle. "A small battle," he said simply.

"What are you talking about?" Vannelli asked the question, but it was obvious to Ann, as she turned to her comrades, that they all wanted to know the same thing.

"Why, he's the man I saw the first day we were here," she explained. "I wish he hadn't been so long in coming for us. Where is he taking us?"

"Back to his camp up in the mountains somewhere. It's a full day's walk from here so we've got to get going." Phillips had already motioned to Larson and Rosman and they understood his signal. Once again they lifted Vannelli between them and prepared to carry him to their new refuge.

"That's silly!" Ann spoke more sharply than she intended and added quickly, "For you two to have to carry him like that, I mean. With two bamboo poles and some of these palm branches we can make a stretcher."

Phillips laughed. "You're right. Guess I was too anxious to get out of here."

But it was the guerrilla who made the stretcher. With quick, expert fingers he wound and plaited palm strands across two bamboo poles and in ten minutes had constructed a sturdy seat for Vannelli, the handles of which were easily managed by his two bearers.

"Thank you,—er, what is your name?" Ann smiled at the guerrilla.

"José," he replied, nodding to emphasize the word. "José Santos, from Manila."

"Manila." Ann repeated the word, remembering the blazing city as she had last seen it. Something in her eyes must have shown her thoughts, for José's face darkened with a look of hate that changed his gentle expression to something approaching cruelty.

"I will go back," he said swiftly. "We will go back and drive the devils out."

"You bet we will." Phillips' voice broke the spell of hate that had settled over them like a visible cloud. José looked up and nodded.

"All ready now," he said quietly. "We go." He turned away from the grove and headed for the bank of the stream. Once again they assumed their former line of march with Phillips following after José, Ann behind him, and the stretcher bearers and Walters bringing up the rear. They crossed the narrow stretch of water and almost immediately began to climb. The mountain had been so hidden by the trees surrounding the stream that Ann had not realized it loomed so near. The ground was thickly covered with underbrush, but José appeared to be following a definite course through what seemed a trackless jungle. There was no hint of a trail or path, yet José pushed on as easily and with as little hesitation as though he were walking an open highway. Great trees, whose branches hung down nearly to the ground, crowded in upon them, blotting out the sky and making it seem as though they were walking in some green netherworld that was lighted by an indirect greenish glow. The underbrush was a tangled mass of wiry growth that caught and hindered every footstep.

Ann struggled to keep up with Phillips, who set his pace to match that of José. But more than once she had to stop to push and claw her way past the entangling vines and

branches. The fact that they were going uphill on uneven ground was an added hindrance. She longed to beg for a moment's respite, but remembering how much more difficulty the stretcher bearers were having, she dared not show her own weakness. She did what she could to make the way easier for them and, aided by Walters, held back branches and warned of pitfalls on the way. It was something she could do to make herself forget her own agony of weariness.

But it was not until they reached a stretch of barren rock on the mountainside that Phillips called to José to stop for a rest.

"We're not up to your speed," he said apologetically. "We'll have to stop a bit. Walters, you and I will take the stretcher for the next half hour."

José stopped with the others, but it was plain that he did not enjoy the enforced halt. He did not sit down as the others did, but remained standing in an attitude that showed him to be on the alert. He seemed to be listening and watching for some danger, and several times he started as though he heard a sound that was lost to them.

"Have there been Japs in this part of the mountains?" asked Phillips suddenly.

"Japs!" José spat contemptuously. "They everywhere like ants. They afraid, they know that—" He stopped suddenly and his lips tightened in a grin. "I go back to Manila," he finished.

The mention of a town reminded Ann that this guerrilla could tell them on what part of the coast they were; where, in relation to Bataan. "Did you ask him where we were?" she asked Phillips.

To her astonishment he gave her a warning frown and shook his head. "I did," he whispered softly, "but he shut up like a clam. Evidently he's been told to bring us to his chief and say nothing."

It seemed suddenly ominous to Ann that José had not told them where they were, a warning that all might not be

as he claimed. Perhaps he was a Jap after all, masquerading as a guerrilla to lead them to a Jap prison camp.

She felt Phillips' hand close over hers with a reassuring clasp. "No," he said softly, "José's okay. Lansdale, when he mentioned Lansdale I knew. It was a sort of password."

Ann glanced at him and he explained. "Lansdale is called El Capitán among the guerrillas. There are only a few leaders who know his real name; and the Japs never heard it. José knows, so I know he's all right."

She had to be satisfied with this, but an uneasy sense of alarm was added to her other worries; worries that seemed too much to overcome. Her weariness was paramount among them. Would she have the strength to keep up with the rest, to reach the guerrilla camp by nightfall as José insisted they must? José's uneasiness, his restless anxiety to go on, were other causes for concern. Why was it so important that they hurry? They had been left alone for almost three days in the jungle by the guerrillas; now José wanted them to get to the camp before night. It was a pattern of confusion that weighed on her heavily. She could not understand it and, in her exhausted state, the problem assumed an exaggerated importance.

The hours that followed did nothing to help her, either physically or mentally. José allowed them rest periods every half hour, but before they had been sitting five minutes, he was urging them on again. Hour after hour they labored up the mountain, often climbing what seemed to Ann to be sheer precipices. The struggle to get the stretcher up these rock cliffs was nearly superhuman. Several times the men attached ropes made of vines to the stretcher handles and hauled Vannelli up that way. Sometimes they were plunged into ravines and gullies that went downhill as sharply as other parts of the mountain climbed uphill. Only occasionally did they find a cleared area of bare rock, and on one of these Ann caught her first intimation of where they were. She had sunk down on the sun-baked rock

to rest, and she lay for a moment, feeling that she could never move again.

When she heard Phillips say something to Vannelli, she forced herself to sit up and look about her. There, lying right before her, was the sea, a broad blue expanse that seemed to come to the very base of the mountain up which they had struggled. She glanced behind her and saw that they had reached the summit of the mountain, for there was nothing but sky, a glittery sun-blazened sky, behind her. Suddenly her blood quickened. The fact that they had actually reached the top of this towering mountain seemed a symbol, proof that they had attained a definite objective. Behind them, far inland in the distance, were range on range of rolling mountain peaks, like the waves of a great ocean. The nearer landward view was obscured by the jungle growth that crept up almost to the top of the mountain, but Ann knew that the ground dipped downward into a steep valley. To seaward all was a blank expanse of deceptively smooth water; not a ship or a plane was visible on all that wide stretch of sea and sky. Far off to her left was a wooded peninsula that jutted broadly into the water. It was this last distinguishing feature of the landscape that gave Ann a hint as to where they might be. She knew the configuration of the island of Luzon as well as she knew the lines in her palm. She remembered that peninsula from the map; it was just north of Bataan, and the bay between the two was Subic Bay. If she had guessed correctly, they must be just north of Bataan in the Zambales Mountains. She dared not ask José if she were right in her estimate, but in her own mind she felt fairly certain of her geography.

"How much farther do we have to go?" she asked, as José motioned them to their feet.

He waved down into the valley below, but made no more definite reply. Two of the men picked up the stretcher and they continued the march. If any of them had thought it would be easier to go downhill than up they were doomed

to disappointment. It was more difficult, if anything, to keep a footing on the slippery, often rock-covered ground that plunged so steeply down the mountainside. Ann clutched at every vine and branch along the way to keep from falling, but could not save herself many times from pitching headlong on her hands and knees. The men who carried the stretcher had a torturing task, and now all of the men had to help manage the unwieldy object.

Fortunately they had not gone far before José reached a trail that made the going easier. This narrow track was a heartening sign to all of them, for it proved that they were nearing some center of human activity. Before now they had felt that they were the first human beings to come this way, and the wild jungle growth had seemed oppressively primitive and deserted. Ann, who had seen many native villages on the islands, looked forward to the rows of neat nipa palm huts that formed these villages. She knew the natives to be friendly and helpful, and her imagination had pictured the welcome they would receive when they reached the camp.

Therefore it came as a stunning surprise when José reached a small clearing in the bottom of the valley and turned to them with a wide sweep of his arm.

"We are here," he announced. "The camp; it is here."

For a moment no one said a word. They looked about at the deserted clearing in blank dismay. There was not a hut in sight, no sign of a human being. The thick grass in the center of the clearing had been trampled somewhat, but it was the only proof that they were not the first to reach this spot.

José chuckled, a triumphant sound that made Ann shiver. Were her first suspicions true? Was José a Jap who had led them into a carefully arranged trap? Suddenly he whistled, a soft penetrating note that sounded like the call of a bird. Instantly the clearing was alive with men, men dressed just as José was and all of them bearing rifles.

"Phillips!" Ann's terrified cry was stilled instantly as Phillips stepped forward and gripped her arm.

The men came toward them and as they drew near Ann saw that they were smiling, smiling with that same triumphant grin that José had given them. The men stopped some ten feet from where they stood and one of them stepped forward. He was older than the rest and wore a costume that was made up entirely of mismatched American Army clothing.

"Gabriel, Capitán Gabriel," he said in a cultivated voice. "Welcome. We are sorry not to have been able to lead you here before, but we were delayed by a—a—"

"A small battle?" The words escaped Ann before she could stop them. She felt Phillips fingers dig into her arm.

Captain Gabriel stared at her and then laughed. "Yes, exactly so. A patrol of the Japanese had to be attended to. But forgive me. I forget your weariness. Please let us make you welcome." He raised his hand and beckoned.

Ann stared at the thin, bent old woman who limped forward in obedience to the captain's signal. She had not noticed her before, chiefly because she was dressed just as the men were in faded khaki trousers and shirt. But her gray hair, pinned into a tight knot at the back of her head, and her frail figure proved her to be a woman.

"Go with Bianca, Señorita," said the captain. "She will attend to you."

Ann hesitated, but only for a moment. There was no mistaking the kindness and the friendly warmth in Bianca's eyes. Each line of her brown and wrinkled face showed that she wanted to help her, to do all she could to make her comfortable. Suddenly Ann was grateful for another feminine presence. She had been among men so long that she had nearly forgotten what it was to talk to one of her own sex.

But the hope of talking to Bianca was quickly dashed. As she went forward to join the woman, Captain Gabriel

said, "I regret that Bianca does not speak English. You speak Spanish perhaps? She knows a little of the language."

Ann shook her head. "Only a very little," she murmured. As she walked with Bianca across the clearing, she turned to see Phillips and Captain Gabriel already deep in conversation. The captain was gesticulating energetically and Phillips was nodding in reply. Obviously he was pleased with what the captain was saying, for Ann saw him smiling. Suddenly she knew that it was all right, that these people were her friends, that no harm could come from them. She took Bianca's hand and gave it a quick squeeze to show her feeling. The woman understood and chuckled, her thin shoulders shaking with mirth.

They reached the edge of the clearing where the trees grew thickly, and Bianca stooped down to push aside an overhanging cluster of vines. Just behind the branches was a tiny hut, merely a shelter, but one that had been equipped with a small bed made from sacking. A few pitiful personal articles showed that this was Bianca's home. The woman gestured to the bed and nodded invitingly. Rough as it was it looked enormously comfortable to Ann. She walked forward, forgetting her hunger, her concern for her companions, everything, in an overpowering desire for sleep.

Just as she sat down on the edge of the cot she heard Phillips call her name. He appeared a moment later at the entrance to the shelter. His appearance reawakened her curiosity about the camp and its occupants. What had he learned from Captain Gabriel? Then in a flash of dismay she remembered Vannelli. He was her patient, she ought to attend to him before she did anything else.

"Vannelli?"

Phillips nodded. "Sleeping like a baby. The men stowed him in a hut; they're all around the clearing hidden like this. We've all been assigned one. Here's some food." He handed her a little heap of grayish stuff on a wooden plat-

ter. Hungry as she was Ann looked at it with a grimace of distaste.

"Taro root. It's been pounded to a paste in the native way. Eat it; you ought to be used to it by now. Look here," he went on, as Ann began to eat, "I didn't get much from Gabriel, except to know that he's okay. This is a temporary camp; the guerrillas have lots like them in these mountains. Evidently they're expecting something or someone, for Gabriel seems to be on the jump every minute. We're not to know what it is until it happens, I guess. That's why I wanted to tell you to be ready for anything. It may be a raid on some Jap patrol, for all I know. But remember I'll be near by if you hear any shooting."

"Are there Japs near here?" Ann heard her voice shake.

Phillips shrugged. "I don't know. He said something about 'The Boss.' He must be waiting for orders of some sort. Get some sleep now and don't worry. Gabriel's okay, I know that."

If Phillips had thought to put her mind at rest he could have said nothing that would have disturbed her more. She lay down on the cot, every nerve in her body tense. Bianca sat down at the entrance to the hut as though she were guarding her. A thin ray of sunlight slanted across her worn face, accentuating each furrow and wrinkle as though it were carved in stone. Ann glanced at her watch. Six o'clock. Twelve hours ago they had been in that camp on the other side of the mountain. She closed her eyes, but her ears were straining for any odd or unusual sound that might mean danger. Never in the world could she go to sleep. The faint sound of talking came to her; once she thought she distinguished Phillips' voice. He must still be talking with Captain Gabriel. Suddenly Bianca began to sing, a strange monotonous chant that was soft and soothing. Her old, cracked voice was like a lullaby. Ann's eyelids grew heavier; she opened her eyes as she heard Phillips laugh. Then she was asleep.

The sounds that wakened her brought her to her feet with a terrifying sense of alarm. Men were shouting, calling to one another in quick excited voices. Once again she heard Phillips' voice above the others. It was moonlight, bright moonlight, that lighted the clearing with a silver, flooding radiance. Instinctively she looked at the luminous dial of her waterproof watch once more. One o'clock; she had been asleep seven hours, a deep, dreamless sleep that had refreshed her wonderfully.

Bianca was nowhere to be seen, and not until Ann pushed her way through the vines before the hut did she see her with the others in the center of the clearing. There must have been more than twenty men there, and all of them were walking toward an opening in the trees to her right. She caught sight of Phillips with Larson and the others and went toward them.

"What is it?" she cried. "What's the matter?"

At that instant she heard a new sound, one that sent a chill down her spine. It was the deep drone of a plane approaching from the south. She snatched at Phillips' hand to attract his attention.

"Japs?" Her dry lips could scarcely form the word.

"I don't know," he muttered. "Something's up. They seem to have been waiting for this. Come on; they aren't trying to stop us. We can follow them."

The guerrillas had already disappeared into the trees and Phillips pulled Ann along with him in their wake. They found themselves on a narrow trail that wound through the crowding trees, a track that was lighted fitfully where the moon shone through the branches. They followed it a short distance and then with surprising suddenness they were standing at the edge of another cleared area, this one larger than the other—a long narrow space cut from the jungle. It seemed to be littered with small trees and shrubs, but even as Ann noted this, the guerrillas began clearing them away. They did not have to cut them,

the branches and bushes were lying rootless on the ground.

"Well, I'll be darned." Phillips whistled softly. "A landing strip! Look!"

Ann followed the direction of his pointing hand. Just above the black line of trees to the south a plane appeared, a plane that flew low and seemed to be settling for a landing. She stared at it with unbelieving eyes, for it bore no markings and was nothing but a dark outline against the moonlit sky.

"Is it one of ours?" The words came in a whisper that was almost lost beneath the growing roar of the plane.

Phillips did not answer. He glanced at the landing strip then up at the plane. A flare of light from the north end of the field glowed for an instant and went out.

"Landing signal." Phillips' tense voice betrayed his mounting excitement. They watched the plane settle toward the earth, sliding down toward the line of trees and disappearing in their shadow. It reappeared almost at once, skimming across the surface of the landing strip. Its wheels touched once, bounded up and a moment later hit the ground again. For one second it hesitated with a sort of shuddering indecision, then a loud rending crash shook the air. The plane lurched and plunged forward on its nose, its right wing tipped toward the sky.

For a moment a deathly silence hung over the field as the full realization of the tragedy came home to those who watched. Then a long wail of anguished dismay, anger, and argument burst forth. Ann heard Phillips swearing to himself; then he ran toward the crippled plane. She followed and saw the pilot pull himself up out of the cockpit and jump to the ground. At least he wasn't hurt, she told herself with a breath of relief. Then something jerked her to a halt—a voice that brought her up short and left her standing there not twenty feet from the plane, staring at the man beside it. The voice was angry; it shouted at the men who were running toward it. She caught something

about a "log." But what did she care about a log? That voice! How many, many times in recent months had she heard that some voice in her thoughts and dreams? It was a part of her, something she had longed to hear in her every waking moment. It couldn't be true; she was dreaming, the whole thing was unreal.

She took a faltering step toward the plane. The man turned in her direction. The moonlight fell full on his face and then Ann knew that this was no dream.

"Bruce!" She began to run forward.

13

ANN saw him stiffen as though an electric shock had struck him. He did not move, made no attempt to come toward her. In the moonlight she saw the expression of blank wonder on his face, but all this flashed across her consciousness in the space of seconds. She was at his side only a moment after she recognized him.

"Bruce, Bruce!" She heard her voice within her inner ear, but it made no sound. "It's Ann, it's me, don't you know me?"

"Don't I know you?" He did not answer his own question or wait for her to do so. A moment later she was in his arms and she had no thought of anything but the reality of his presence. She felt his arms crushing her as though he would never let her go, and suddenly she began to cry. The incredible knowledge that Bruce was here, that after months of separation she should meet him in this lonely valley, was too much for her strength or imagination to comprehend. With her face buried in his shoulder she

sobbed as though she were releasing at last all the fear, exhaustion, and strain of the past days.

Bruce said nothing, made no effort to check her tears. She felt his hand press her head closer against him, and the strength of the pressure was a comfort that no words could express. Then she heard him murmur something that was intended only for her to hear. She scarcely caught the words, but their sense was plain. He was trying to tell her that he loved her, that he was happy to have her here in his arms.

It seemed a long time that she stayed like this, held closely and firmly against his shoulder, but in reality it was only a few short minutes. She heard other voices finally, the amazed exclamation that showed Phillips was watching them and a series of interested questions and comments from the other onlookers. She raised her head and smiled up at Bruce.

"I'm all right now," she murmured. "It's just—just—Bruce, what are *you* doing here?"

"I might ask the same of you with more justification," he returned. "The last I knew you were safe aboard the *Sea Haven*."

"The *Sea Haven*!" It seemed an age to Ann since she had left the hospital ship. "Then you didn't hear that—I mean you didn't get word that I'd been— Oh, what do they think happened to me? Evelyn, she must think I was washed overboard and—"

Bruce shook her gently. "Take it easy, go slow. You aren't making sense. What did happen, how did you get here?"

Ann shook her head helplessly. "It's so long—so much has happened."

"Perhaps I can tell about it all." It was Phillips who spoke.

Ann turned and saw him standing near. "Yes, he can.

Phillips, you—" She waved helplessly. It seemed impossible to explain all the events of the past days, all that had happened since she last saw the *Sea Haven*, that misty outline on a storm-swept sea. The shock of seeing Bruce had upset her completely; she could not gather her thoughts for a coherent explanation.

"Phillips, sir, Coxswain Phillips of the *Sea Haven*." Phillips sounded as though what he had to say were the most ordinary story in the world. Dimly, through her confusion and happiness, she heard his calm, unemotional voice as it gave a brief account of their recent adventures. She scarcely heard the words, but some instinct told her that he was playing down his part in the affair.

"Phillips, you aren't telling it right," she exclaimed, interrupting him in midsentence. "Bruce, he's been wonderful. If it hadn't been for him we'd never be alive now, not one of us." She spoke so emphatically, with such sincerity, that Bruce grinned as he patted her shoulder.

"I know that," he said. "Phillips doesn't have to tell me."

"That's right, sir." From somewhere behind them Larson spoke and a murmur of assent followed his words from the other members of the group.

Phillips' voice tightened. "That's all, sir. José, one of the guerrillas, brought us here to this camp, and I guess they've all been expecting you." His last words were in the nature of a question. Though he could not ask outright, it was plain that he wanted to know Bruce's role in this guerrilla warfare.

"Thanks, Phillips." Bruce held out his hand and smiled. "You see, Miss Bartlett is my fiancée."

"I know, sir," returned Phillips. "Sometimes when she was asleep she'd mention your name."

Bruce's arm tightened on Ann's shoulder. A moment later he said briskly, "You're entitled to an explanation of why I'm here, but I can't give it right now. I've got to see

Captain Gabriel. This plane has got to be repaired." He raised his voice and spoke in a tone Ann had never heard him use.

"Captain Gabriel, where are you? Who is responsible for leaving that log in the middle of the strip? It tore the wheels off my plane." He was angry, bitterly angry, and Ann felt sorry for Captain Gabriel as the latter came forward to speak to Bruce. She paid little heed to the argument, the excuses, and the recriminations that followed. Bruce had forgotten her, he was deep in an angry dispute with Captain Gabriel, and she knew by the tone of his voice that the accident was more than an ordinary one. She stepped back out of the circle of men and suddenly her knees gave way beneath her. She sank down on the grass and closed her eyes.

It still did not seem real; she could hear Bruce's voice, she had felt his arms about her, but she could not make her senses grasp the actuality of his presence. Why was he here, what was his part in these events? Was he one of the guerrillas, was that why she had not heard from him for so long? Then she remembered, remembered a conversation with one of the doctors aboard ship as they were nearing Hawaii. The doctor had spoken of Army and Navy pilots who flew in and out of the islands gathering information and bringing supplies to the guerrillas. Of course Bruce was one of these. He was one of the best pilots in the Navy; it was only to be expected that he would be called upon to do this dangerous work, work that called for the utmost in flying skill. She knew that she had guessed his role correctly, and the knowledge gave her an odd sort of relief. Somehow it made his presence more real.

Suddenly she wished that she need not have seen Bruce for the first time in months looking as she did now. But there was no use in thinking of her appearance. Somehow she knew that Bruce did not care that her clothing was soiled and ragged, that her hair was matted and tangled; he

was only glad, as she was, that they were together once more. Bianca had tried to wash some of the stains and dirt from her slack suit that evening, but had only succeeded in making it look almost worse than before. The old woman had gestured to her own poor garments in a way that Ann understood to mean that she wished she had something wearable to offer her. Ann had shaken her head and smiled her gratitude for Bianca's wish, but the outcome of it all was that Ann's clothing was less recognizable than ever as a once-trim sport suit.

She shut all thought of herself out of her mind and looked up to see that Bruce, Phillips, and several of the guerrillas were inspecting the plane. It was turned slightly on its left wing, and the undercarriage with its damaged wheels was plainly visible in the moonlight.

"We can't do anything about it until daylight," said Bruce. He spoke sharply, disappointment and a sort of suppressed impatience in his voice. "If we have any luck, we might—" He stopped and appeared to consider a new idea. "Well, we'll have to wait," he went on.

He gestured to some of the men to help him and Ann saw them right the plane, pulling the tipping wing down until the body rested flat on the ground. It was a small, single-motor plane, for reconnaissance work and carried only one man, the pilot. The plane rested there, still tilted slightly to one side at an awkward angle. Bruce began to swear softly as he stood back to look at it.

"That kills it," she heard him mutter. He shrugged his shoulders with a gesture of annoyance. "Get your men to cover it," he ordered sharply. "Hide it entirely with those branches and bushes and for the love of heaven get rid of that log." He kicked savagely at a log that lay near the nose of the plane.

He turned away as the men under Captain Gabriel's direction began to carry the camouflage material toward the plane. "Come on, Ann," he said. "Let's go back to camp.

Got anything to eat there? Hey," he shouted back to the men, "unload that stuff from the cockpit and bring it into camp."

"What is it?" Ann walked beside him, now fully alive to the fact of his nearness and suddenly sure that she had never been happier in her life. Bruce was with her; he was walking beside her with the same long strides that she had to, as always, skip to keep up with. She did not care what he had brought in the plane; nothing mattered except the magic of his being with her now.

She glanced up at him and took his arm in both hands. "Oh, Bruce." The words were only a soft sigh, but they expressed all she felt.

"I know." His voice was suddenly harsh. "Ann, you've got to stop it. You've got to get somewhere and stay there so I'll know you're safe. I thought you were aboard ship and was pretty certain you couldn't get into mischief there. Why do you always have to get yourself into fixes like this? I want you to be where I know you're safe. Ann, will you marry me? Marry me and leave the service?"

Ann stopped short and stared up at him. He was looking down at her, his eyes begging her for an answer. There was nothing different about him; he was the same Bruce she had always known. She looked at his lean, brown face with its blue eyes, the wide shoulders and the shock of light hair, burned almost white by the sun. No, he was the same, but what was he saying? Was he asking her to leave the Navy, to desert her post before the war was over? Of course she could marry him and stay in the service, but that was not the way they wanted it and not what he was asking her.

"I shouldn't have said it." Bruce's hand closed on hers in a tight grip. "I know you can't leave the service and I know what we've always planned. Ann, we'll wait, the way we want it. You know, that house in the country and—and everything."

The tears rolled down her cheeks as she pressed her face against his arm. A house in the country! Where was it, when would they ever have it? In this jungle valley, among these people, it seemed more remote, more impossible a dream than ever.

He kissed her and then grinned in an effort to reassure her.

"It's just—it's just—" She could not go on.

"I know, I know what you mean. Don't talk of it. We'll have it all some day and we're still right to wait for it. Don't mention it again. Tell me, are you all right?"

"All right! Of course I am." Ann straightened up indignantly. "We had enough to eat and drink and—and Phillips to help us. But Bruce, I want to know about you. Tell me everything."

"Not now. It's a long story and I've a lot to do before I have time to tell you about myself. Look here, Ann, I've got to talk to Captain Gabriel and get his report. I'll be here tomorrow fixing that blasted plane and we can talk then. You go back to sleep."

"Sleep! Why I couldn't any more sleep than jump to the moon!"

Bruce kissed her once more. "You'll have to," he said, after an interval. "I've got a lot of things to discuss with Gabriel and it's all private stuff. Here he is now, so you scoot along."

Captain Gabriel had approached along the path behind them and joined them in the center of the smaller clearing. He seemed eager to speak to Bruce, and Ann knew that they did not want her to hear their conversation. Feeling very much like a small girl who has been told to leave the room while her elders talked, she turned away and went back toward Bianca's shelter. The old woman was at the door of the hut and it was obvious from her manner that she knew all about Bruce's relationship to Ann. She looked at Ann, giggled with a delighted rolling movement of her

shoulders, and in every way suggested that she approved of their romantic reunion.

"Señor Mittell, il homo si—" She raised her eyebrows and waved her hands to express her approbation.

Ann nodded. She was in no mood to exchange confidences in broken Spanish with Bianca, no matter how much she agreed with all she implied. She let herself be led to the cot once more and even lay down upon it. But sleep was far from her thoughts. She was wide awake and so full of mixed joy, excitement, and confused questioning that all she wanted was a chance to sort out her emotions. Bruce here; it was a realization that staggered her mind even now. She did not really need to be told of his mission, of what he had been doing in the months since she had seen him. But why had he not written her? It seemed strange that he could not have sent her some word; he could not always have been in Jap-occupied territory where it was impossible to send and receive mail. There was some mystery here, and her mind could not grasp it.

She closed her eyes and tried to blot out the sounds that came from the near-by clearing. There was the murmur of voices; an occasional louder voice spoke above the others and was always followed by a short silence. Then someone went on in a monologue. Ann could not make out whether it was Bruce or Captain Gabriel who issued these commands. Once she heard Bruce's voice distinctly, and he spoke in that angry tone she had heard him use before. The sounds became a murmuring pattern of voices that went on and on; she no longer tried to distinguish them. In spite of her certainty that she could not sleep, her efforts to compose herself and that monotonous murmur of sound relaxed her. Her eyelids began to feel heavy and she sank into sleep. Her last visual memory was of Bianca—the outline of her head in the moonlight as she kept watch at the door of the shelter.

It was dawn when she awoke once more, this time awak-

ening naturally from a quiet sleep. For a long time she lay on the cot staring up at the interlaced palm leaves above her and wondering where she was. Then in a flash memory returned and with it the knowledge that Bruce was near her. She was off the cot and out the door in a matter of moments. She thrust aside the vines before the shelter and stepped out into the clearing. It was completely deserted; there was nothing there, no sign of a human being. The slightly trampled grass was the only evidence that anyone had ever been here.

"Bruce!" The cry was a wild, terrified scream. She was alone; everyone had gone and forgotten her. Even Bruce. There was no answer to her shout, and only the soft sighing of the wind in the palm trees broke the immense silence about her.

"Bruce, Phillips, where are you?" She ran forward into the center of the clearing, feeling that she was living in a nightmare, that this lonely silence was part of a dream that she must shake off before she lost her reason.

"Señorita!" The voice came from behind her and Ann whirled about, almost sobbing with relief. Bianca stood there, rubbing her eyes and yawning. Obviously Ann's shouts had roused her from sleep.

"Where are they? Where is everybody?" Suddenly Ann wanted to shake an answer from the old woman, who stood there shrugging helplessly and waving her hands vaguely in the direction of the jungle to the south.

"There? Off there? Why? What are they doing? Why did they leave us? Are they coming back?" Ann's questions burst from her, even though she knew she could expect no answer from the old woman.

"They will be back, Señorita," said a voice from behind Bianca.

Ann recognized José's voice and watched him push aside the vines and come toward her. He, too, was yawning.

"Where did they go?" she asked again, now more than

ever convinced that something momentous had happened while she slept. "Why did they leave us behind?"

José smiled. "To guard the Señor's lady," he said.

Ann wanted to say that two sleeping people were not the most desirable guards, but she resisted the impulse. In any case, she told herself, why should I be given any special consideration? She was annoyed that Bruce had seen fit to leave her here with these two strangers, but her curiosity was greater than any other feeling.

"Where did they go?" She had asked the question so often she was beginning to tire of it.

José hesitated a moment, then said something to Bianca in a native dialect that Ann could not understand. Bianca shrugged her shoulders and José turned to Ann.

"They have gone to do the work for which we have trained ourselves," he said simply. "The Señor brought word that the time was ripe."

"Time? What work? You mean Bruce—Captain Mitchell—is in command of—of all these guerrillas?" Ann felt she ought to know the answer to these questions, that José's reply should have meant something to her.

"In a sense," was the answer. "It is he who brings word from outside." He hesitated once more. "There is a Jap ammunition and supply dump not far from here. We have been waiting from the right moment to destroy it. The Señor has told us that the time is now. Ah, listen!" His voice quickened with expectation.

From somewhere beyond the surrounding trees Ann caught the sound of voices, high excited voices that seemed to ring with a note of exultation.

"They have accomplished the mission." José's voice was one of quiet satisfaction. "God grant that all have returned safely and without injury."

"Injury! Vannelli!" The two thoughts were synonymous in her mind; and once more Ann felt a strong twinge of remorse. What sort of a nurse was she to forget him as she

had been forgetting him recently? Bruce's dramatic appearance was no excuse for the neglect of the one duty that was hers in this strange existence in which she found herself.

José understood her exclamation and gestured to the opposite side of the clearing. "In there," he said. "I do not think he is progressing. The fever, it is high."

But Ann scarcely waited for him to finish. She ran to the spot he had indicated and saw another shelter behind the screening bushes. Vannelli lay within it, tossing restlessly on a pallet made from palm branches. One glance was sufficient to show Ann that he was suffering from malaria; she knew where he had contracted it. That day they had spent hiding from the Jap soldiers on the bank of the stream had been a perfect place for the malarial mosquito.

She knelt beside him and spoke to him. But he did not know her; he was delirious and burning with the fever. Quinine, if only she had quinine for him. She had forgotten the approaching men, the fact that Bruce was returning from the raid with the guerrillas. Her only thought now was for Vannelli. The shelter was completely bare of furnishings; she had not even a blanket to wrap him in.

"José, José!" She ran back to the clearing, just as Captain Gabriel with Bruce at his side entered it from the opposite side. For a moment the confusion of voices was too strong for her; she could not attract anyone's attention. Even Bruce seemed to have forgotten her. He was carrying an armful of rifles and, as Ann reached his side, he dumped them upon a growing heap in the center of the clearing. Obviously the raid had been successful. The heap of rifles and ammunition cases told her that, but she did not care now; she could not share in the men's triumph.

"Bruce, Bruce, listen to me!" She shook his arm. "Did you bring any medical supplies with you?" Then she saw something else, something that increased her urgent sense of wresting an answer from him. Several of the men near

Bruce had been wounded; she saw one with blood streaming from a cut on his forehead, another who was limping badly. She looked quickly at Bruce. No, he was all right, nothing had happened to him, she saw with a rush of relief. But the others, she must help them; and yet she had nothing to work with, unless Bruce had brought the precious supplies with him in the plane.

"What's the matter with Vannelli?" It was Phillips who asked the question. He sounded alarmed and Ann turned upon him, suddenly determined to make someone understand.

"Malaria, he's got malaria. And look at these men! Are there any medical supplies?"

"I brought them, Ann." She heard Bruce's quiet voice and felt his hand on her arm. "There's quinine, sulfa, and plenty of bandaging."

Ann hardly waited for him to finish. She saw Captain Gabriel gesture to one of his men and a moment later he brought a box from some hiding place and offered it to her. It was a large, well-stocked medical kit and she knew it contained the necessary quinine. She seized the box and, with Phillips and Bruce, went back to the shelter where Vannelli lay. It was easy to make him swallow the first dose of quinine, but more difficult to make him stay wrapped in the blankets that Phillips brought at her command. She ordered him to watch Vannelli while she turned her attention to the wounded among the guerrillas. These men tried to make light of their injuries, but she made them submit to having them attended to. It was as though she welcomed the opportunity to make use of her nursing skill. Always at the back of her mind was a sense of guilt; she had neglected Vannelli. Bruce's appearance had driven him from her thoughts, and now she was determined to make up for it and to work off her guilt in giving him extra attention. The others who had been wounded, in what she soon learned had been a skirmish with the Jap guards at the am-

munition dump, were easier to make comfortable. It was Vannelli who worried her; his fever was rising rapidly in spite of the quinine and the warm blankets.

"Miss Bartlett." Phillips touched her arm to attract her attention. Evidently he had spoken her name several times already, but her preoccupation with her patient had made her oblivious of everything but him. "Miss Bartlett, Captain Mitchell wanted me to ask you to see him."

"Bruce!" Ann, who had been kneeling by Vannelli, sat back on her heels. She had forgotten Bruce. "Where is he?" For the first time she realized that he was no longer near her. She and Phillips were alone in the shelter with Vannelli.

"Out seeing to the plane. He hopes to get it fixed soon. He wants to talk to you as soon as you can leave here. Go now. I can watch Vannelli. I know what's to be done for him."

Ann hesitated. It was true that Phillips could do all that could be done for him. The chief thing now was to see that he did not free himself from the blankets.

Suddenly she had an idea. "I'll go," she exclaimed. "Watch those blankets. No more quinine until I get back." She got to her feet and began to run toward the path that led to the landing strip. If her idea came to anything, Vannelli would soon be where he could be given the best of care.

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BUT the sense of urgency that her idea had given her when it first flashed across her mind was somewhat lessened when she saw Bruce. He was working over the plane with the as-

sistance of Larson and Walters. The latter was a mechanic and it was he who was directing the work of repair.

"But are you sure the grass is dry enough?" she heard Larson saying as she approached the group by the plane. "It's the dickens of a risk."

"It's the only chance." Bruce spoke emphatically. "If this doesn't work nothing will, and I've got to get out of here. I wish to heaven Landsdale had been able to keep that transmitter working. The time is getting short." He sounded worried and more impatient than Ann had ever heard him. All that he said was completely incomprehensible to her. What they planned to do to get the plane off the ground, the mention of a radio transmitter, and the necessity of Bruce's leaving immediately were all part of a scheme which her imagination could not grasp.

She glanced at Bruce, longing to have him explain it all to her; but he had not even noticed that she was there. He was bending over something that lay on the ground beside the plane, so absorbed in it that she dared not call attention to herself. She saw that they had removed the landing wheels from the plane and that these lay broken and discarded a short distance away.

"If I had just a couple of tools, we wouldn't have to worry about these darn ski poles," exclaimed Walters suddenly. He looked longingly at the bent and twisted wheels as though willing them to resume their former state of perfection. "These pliers and small tools you had in the plane don't help much."

"Be thankful for small favors," retorted Bruce. "How's it coming? Ready to attach them?"

"As ready as I'll ever be," was the doubtful reply. Walters and the others lifted a long, slightly bent bamboo pole from the grass and carried it to the plane. The machine had once more been tilted over on one wing so that the undercarriage was exposed.

With open-mouthed wonder Ann saw that the men were

attaching the bamboo pole to the bottom of the plane, using a variety of makeshift appliances to hold it in place. They had considerable difficulty in getting it firmly fastened, and she heard them muttering imprecations that seemed to relieve their feelings. She knew then what Bruce planned to do, how he hoped to get the plane off the narrow landing strip. He was going to use the bamboo poles as skis, hoping that the wiry grass would be slippery enough to slide over. The front end of the pole was bent upward, and it took no great power of insight to realize that this was what he planned to do.

"Bruce!" The danger of such an attempt shocked the exclamation from her, for she needed little flying knowledge to understand the risk, the near impossibility, of successfully accomplishing such a feat.

He turned and waved to her so casually that she felt snubbed and wished she had not spoken. She heard him say something to Walters, then he came toward her.

"I'm glad you came," he said. He took her hand and led her away from the plane toward the trees surrounding the little field. They reached the shelter of a huge banyan and sat down on the grass. For a moment he said nothing, but stared out across the field to the plane and the men working over it.

"Bruce, you can't try that," she exclaimed. "You can't get off, not with a passenger in the plane with you, too."

He glanced at her and grinned. "Well, that's one thing I don't have to talk over then," he said surprisingly. "But don't worry; one of the fellows got off in just this way down on Leyte and I have more room than he did." He glanced at his watch. "I ought to be there now; it's getting darn close to zero hour."

Ann shook her head in bewilderment. "Zero hour for what?" she demanded. "Bruce, you just talk in riddles. Can't you tell me what you've been doing all these months? Why didn't you write me?"

His hand closed over hers and silenced her abruptly. "I hated that part of my job the most," he said. "Not being able to write you; but you know I would have if I could. It was all part of my job. I was supposed to be out of things altogether. I seldom got to a place where I could mail a letter anyway. But I felt you'd understand, that you'd know I still loved you and was thinking of you almost all the time."

Ann was silent. There was no mistaking the sincerity in his voice, but there was still a soreness in her heart as she remembered those long weeks and months of agonized doubt and worry.

"That was the worst part of it," he repeated. "I can't tell you much of what I've been doing, but you must guess a lot of it." He gestured to the plane and back toward the camp behind them. "There are several of us who've been doing work like this among the guerrillas, flying supplies in and getting information out from the guerrilla leaders. Gabriel is one of the best of these fellows."

"What about this Lansdale? I thought he was the leader of all these men." Ann spoke sharply. She was worried and unhappy and it showed in her tone. It was almost as though she were blaming the unknown Captain Lansdale for her feeling.

"Lansdale? If it weren't for him, we wouldn't be in a position to—" He stopped and closed his lips tightly. Ann knew that he had been about to betray a secret and wished that he had gone a little farther to give her some inkling of it. "Lansdale," he went on after a moment, "works farther inland. He has a radio transmitter he's set up in the hills, and we've got most of our information from that. But it's got out of whack, and that's why I was sent in. A fine time to lose your radio." He said the last words so low that Ann knew he had not meant her to hear them.

Something was happening or was about to happen. Every tense line in Bruce's face showed her that. The way

he kept glancing toward the plane was further proof of his anxiety to get away. The men were attaching the second bamboo pole now, and Bruce got quickly to his feet.

"I'm more in the way than anything over there, but I want to see how it's coming along," he said. "With any luck we'll be out of here in half an hour. Thank heaven Gabriel had the information I came after, so I don't have to wait for that. It's amazing how much he's able to find out just by the bamboo telegraph. It will give our guns just the right line of fire."

"Bruce!" Ann had twice tried to interrupt him with questions, and now she shouted his name. Almost all that he was saying meant nothing to her.

He stopped and stared at her. Obviously he scarcely realized that he had been speaking aloud, for a look of doubt crept into his eyes.

"Bamboo telegraph? Guns, our guns? What do you mean?"

He seemed relieved and began talking swiftly. "The bamboo telegraph? You haven't heard of that? Why, that's how these natives get word to each other. We can't do everything by radio. There aren't enough on the islands. These natives can send word by messenger faster than you'd believe possible. That's how Captain Gabriel gets his information, and he had all I came for and all we—that is all that I need to know," he finished lamely.

"But the guns?" persisted Ann. "What about our guns? What have they to do with Captain Gabriel's information?"

"Did I say anything about guns?" Bruce looked at her and suddenly Ann knew that she wasn't to ask any more questions. He had said more than he intended already and Ann saw that he regretted his impulsive words.

Ann frowned and looked away from him, hurt that he would not confide in her. Even though she realized he was keeping a secret not his own she felt that she could be

trusted. After all, she told herself, who would I tell anything to in this lonely place?

"Look here, don't be angry," he begged. "We haven't time for that. You'll know all about it soon, very soon. As soon as we get back to Leyte, you'll know."

"Leyte? I get back to Leyte? Bruce, what do you mean? I'm not going back with you. Vannelli is." Ann had risen to her feet and now stood face to face with Bruce, every line of her tense body showing her determination to make him see the necessity of getting Vannelli out in the plane, out to a hospital where he could be looked after properly.

"Vannelli? What are you saying? *You* are going, so let's hear no more about it. Do you think I'd leave you here now that—that the— Oh, Lord! Ann, keep quiet and do as I say. The plane will be ready any minute. You can't stay here anyway. Gabriel is moving camp. After that raid on the ammunition dump, the Japs will be out looking for him. It's not safe to stay here. He's leaving any minute now."

Ann had never heard Bruce speak so forcefully. He was angry, too; angry that she dared to argue the matter with him. She knew it would be no use to try to convince him that Vannelli must go with him. She knew how sick Vannelli was, how necessary it was that he get to a hospital. She said nothing, but she had made her resolve. Then Bruce turned away and walked toward the plane.

"You stay right there where I can see you. I'll be taking off in a—"

Bruce never finished his sentence. A shout came from the direction of the camp behind them, a voice that cried out with the terrible urgency of fear, "Japon, Japon, they come!"

"Into the trees! Ann, into the trees and hide!" Ann heard Bruce's warning shout, even as she instinctively shrank back into the shelter of the huge spreading roots of the banyan tree. She saw Bruce running toward the

plane, heard him shout an order. A moment later the men by the plane began to cover it with the bushes that had camouflaged it before. Within three minutes after that warning shout the place where the plane lay hidden looked like nothing but a thick cluster of matted bushes, a natural growth on the little clearing. Bruce and the men then ran for the shelter of the trees on the farther side of the field.

Then Ann turned and pushed her way through the screen of trees that separated her from the hut where Vannelli lay. Once she stumbled over something that lay in her path, and she heard a voice hiss, "Lie down, don't move!"

She saw José lying beneath a bush, a rifle held in the crook of his arm.

"But I have to go to Vannelli!" Ann's protest was cut short by another voice a short distance to one side of her.

"Miss Bartlett, Ann, over here. He's here with me." It was Phillips who spoke, and a wave of relief swept over her. Of course she should have realized that Phillips would take care of Vannelli, that he would hide him. She took a few steps in his direction and almost fell over the bundle of blankets that was Vannelli. Phillips had hidden him within a cluster of bushes and had lain down beside him. She got down on her knees and crawled under the protecting branches of the bushes. They were some distance from the camp and completely hidden in the thick undergrowth.

"Where are they? Who saw them?" Her questions were merely the breath of a whisper. An eerie silence hung over the area; it was as though no living, breathing thing were left there.

"One of the guards. A patrol coming this way. About fifty men; too many for us. Gabriel gave the order to hide out. The Japs may think the camp deserted if we don't show ourselves. If only they don't spot the plane! If they see that, our orders are to shoot it out with— Shh!" The warning was unnecessary. Ann, too, had heard the distant murmur of voices and a dragging scuffle that was the sound

of footsteps. The enemy patrol was coming down the trail by which she, Phillips, and the rest had entered the camp. Once again Ann buried her face in her hands and felt her breath catch in her throat. It seemed an old and terrible story to be hiding from the Japs like this, to lie within the flimsy shelter of the underbrush, praying that she should make no sound or motion to betray herself. She wondered if all warfare were like this; a horrifying confusion of prayer, fear, and hope.

She heard Vannelli moan slightly, and both she and Phillips made the same motion to quiet him. But Phillips was too quick for her, and it was his hand that closed over his mouth, his voice that began to murmur in his ear. She knew that it was better this way; if any words broke through the obscuring fog of his fever it was Phillips' voice that had the better chance of soothing him. Vannelli moved as though to escape Phillips' hand, then quieted. She drew a shaky breath of relief and tried to smile her congratulations to Phillips.

But he had no time to answer her. The vanguard of the Jap patrol broke into the clearing and immediately a tumult of quick, excited voices burst upon the silence. Obviously the Japs knew they had found what they were looking for, even though the clearing was outwardly deserted. Ann heard a voice give a sharp command and instant quiet followed. The voice spoke urgently for a few moments, evidently issuing an order, and then the babble of indistinguishable voices broke out once more. There was the sound of footsteps, some of them coming toward the place where Ann lay hidden. She wondered with a dull sense of fear whether the Jap soldiers had been told to beat through the undergrowth in search of them. The footsteps came nearer. She heard the rustle of branches and the noise of something striking against a near-by tree. Probably they were thrusting through the bushes with their rifles as that other patrol had done. To Ann, as she lay there, it was as though

she were reliving a nightmare. The same pattern of horror was happening again; the sense of imminent death, of waiting for it to strike with every nerve taut, every thought of survival gone, except for that thin breath of hope which is the last sense to die in all men.

The nearest footsteps came farther into the underbrush. They were not twenty feet away when a loud triumphant shout cut through the confusion of rustling branches and trampling feet. The call was evidently a command for the soldiers to come, for the noise near them receded rapidly and a minute later all the voices were concentrated at a point near the farther end of the clearing.

"They've found the path to the landing strip," muttered Phillips. "If they spot that plane, we'll have to be ready for them. José!"

"Señor?" José sounded as calm as though nothing unusual were happening. Ann knew that hiding from a Jap patrol was part of his daily life as a guerrilla, but she wondered if she could ever take it as easily as he did.

"Get your rifle ready. We'll crawl out to the edge of the field where we can watch them. They won't notice us now. They're too busy congratulating themselves on finding that path."

José got to his knees and began moving cautiously toward the landing strip behind them. The thicket of trees and bushes that separated the camping ground from the field was only thirty or forty feet wide. The place where they had been hiding was in the center of this thicket, and it did not take José and Phillips long to make their way to a spot where they could command a view of the landing strip. From where she lay Ann could see them stretched full length upon the ground, their rifles pointed out in the direction of the plane.

They had only two or three minutes to wait. The Japs entered the landing strip at the lower end where the path led them, and once again the hullabaloo of shouting

broke out. Evidently they were tremendously excited at what they saw and quite aware of the use to which this long, narrow, cleared area had been put.

Suddenly Ann could bear the suspense of waiting no longer. She must see what was going on out there, must know whether or not the Japs recognized that heap of brush over the plane as a camouflage. She took a quick look at Vannelli and saw instantly that he had sunk once more into the coma that his high fever induced. He would be safe for a few minutes; long enough for her to satisfy her burning desire to see what the Japs were doing.

The confusion of shouting from the Japs was too great for her movements to be heard. She only hoped they were too occupied in inspecting the field to notice any slight motion at its edge. Almost as soon as the thought of joining Phillips and José came to her, she was at their side. She had crawled toward them so rapidly that neither of them had time to order her back or even to notice what she was doing until she appeared near them. Even then they paid no heed to her; they were watching the Japs with eyes that noted their every movement, on the alert for the first indication that they understood the significance of that thicket in the center of the field. To Ann it seemed so obviously, so certainly, a covering for the plane that she wondered how the Japs could mistake it even for an instant. It loomed up in the middle of the field in a way that betrayed what lay beneath it as plainly as though it were marked "Airplane Hidden Here."

She saw one Jap soldier go toward the heap of bushes and gave an audible gasp. Phillips, turning his head a moment, gave her a startled look, and then his eyes once more looked out over the field. It happened a moment later. Two more soldiers joined the first near the plane. The rifle of one must have prodded through the thin covering of bushes, for Ann heard a high cry of delight and then the

Japs converged on the thicket like a swarm of bees, pulling at the branches to get at their find.

But the watchers were as quick as they. The first covering bush had not been pulled away before the sharp crack of rifle fire broke over them. Instantly from every side of the field Ann saw the flash of fire, heard the whistling whine of bullets. None of the guerrillas showed himself, but it was obvious to the Japs from what direction their danger lay. They began firing into the surrounding trees, retreating in a group toward the shelter of the undergrowth at the farther end of the field. Ann noted with quick dismay that none of the Japs had been hit; then knew immediately after why the guerrillas had seemed such poor shots. They had fired over the heads of the Japs so as not to damage the plane. Now that the enemy force had retreated toward the trees, abandoning the open area near the plane, she saw several fall to the ground and lie motionless.

The guerrillas remained hidden and the Japs were firing blindly into the undergrowth from their exposed position. This state of affairs did not last long. Within the space of two minutes the Japs, also, were hidden in the protection of the trees at the end of the landing strip. Still, the advantage lay with the guerrillas, for they knew their direction of fire and the Japs must fire blindly toward any one of a hundred locations about the field.

Several bullets had whistled just over Ann's head, and she had not needed Phillips' whispered warning to "Lie low." She flattened herself against the ground, wishing she had the power to dissolve her body into nothingness. But she was not afraid; she had no time to feel any sensation whatsoever. It had been less than five minutes since the Japs had found the plane, but already it seemed hours to Ann that these bullets had been striking so near her, that she had lived with the deafening roar of rifle fire in her ears.

What roused her at last was a shout from Phillips, a

sound that expressed the utmost in amazement. She lifted her head. There in the center of the field she saw Bruce, Larson, Walters, and several of the guerrillas gathered about the half-covered plane. They were tearing at the bushes that remained upon it, freeing it of all encumbrance. Even as she looked she saw one of the guerrillas spin about and fall heavily forward on his face. The Japs were concentrating all their fire now on the men near the plane. Then the field seemed suddenly to be filled with men, men in ragged uniforms who formed a massed group between the plane and the hidden Japs. They were the guerrillas, sprung up from hiding to protect the men about the plane. They advanced on hands and knees, crawling toward the Japs beneath a withering fire. Many fell; Ann saw them lurch forward and lie still. But always the others went on; they did not stop their slow onward movement toward the enemy.

"He's taking her up. Good Lord, he's taking her up!" Ann heard Phillips' cry, even as this same knowledge came home to her. Bruce was going to try his perilous take-off on those rickety bamboo skis under Jap fire. Under the most favorable conditions, it was a near impossibility. She closed her eyes, then opened them. Bruce had turned in her direction. Above the roar of gunfire, she heard him calling to her.

"Ann, Ann, come, come now. Crawl out, keep low." She knew what he wanted her to do. He wished her to crawl through the grass, behind the protecting cordon of guerrillas to the plane. He wanted her to get out with him now. Unconscious of what she did she shook her head. "No," she breathed, "no, Bruce, I can't, I won't."

Phillips shook her arm. "He's calling. What does he want? I can't hear."

Ann knew what she would do then. She turned to Phillips with an intensity that showed the depth of her resolve. "He wants you to bring out Vannelli, you and

José. It's all arranged. He's to go out with Bruce. Hurry. They've cleared the plane. He's ready to go."

Phillips looked at her, a long look. But he said nothing. Perhaps he knew by the expression in Ann's eyes and about her mouth that she meant what she said, that there was no use in arguing the matter. Perhaps he also knew that she was not telling the truth. He nodded and motioned to José. They disappeared in the direction of the place where Vannelli lay and returned a minute later carrying him between them. Ann could not watch them cross the open space that lay between the trees and the plane. They must walk nearly upright; they were plainly visible to the Japs. If anything should happen to Phillips, to Vannelli, what would her sacrifice come to? She heard Bruce shout something, knew that he realized what she was doing.

"Ann, Ann, you idiot. Come here, come here and—" She did not hear anything more. Her hands were over her ears shutting out the pleading in his voice. "Bruce, forgive me, forgive me. I couldn't come and leave him here." The words were a prayer. She dared not answer Bruce for fear he would come to her and make her obey him. Better let him think anything, even that she was dead, than risk that.

She looked up when the roar of the plane's motor thundered above the noise of the rifles. Bruce was in the plane, she saw the outline of his head above the cockpit. Vannelli must be somewhere inside, for Phillips and José were coming toward her on hands and knees and they had left their burden behind. She saw the plane move forward, slowly, sluggishly, lurching heavily on the rough grass. It was headed away from the place where the Japs were concealed, headed into the faint breeze that stirred the trees over her head. It rose once and fell down again with a heavy jolt. But it went on, now so near the end of the cleared space that Ann wondered how Bruce hoped to lift it above the trees. She heard the crescendo of the motor,

now a roar of sound that reverberated through the trees. Then slowly, with a lumbering, one-sided motion, the plane rose above the grass and climbed in a long slow incline into the sky. It cleared the tops of the trees by inches and a moment later became a fast-disappearing speck in the blue above.

"Bruce, good-by, good-by." Ann's words were only a whisper, a muffled sound as she buried her face in her hands and wept. He was gone; he was safe; and Vannelli, too, was safe. It was her own wish that she was not now with Bruce headed for safety and refuge on the islands to the south.

15

THE moment the plane was safely off the ground, the guerrillas abandoned their one-sided fight against the Japs. Since they were greatly out-numbered, there was no particular advantage in continuing the exchange of rifle fire. The guerrillas knew the truth of the adage that "he who fights and runs away lives to fight another day." With their limited number of trained fighting men and scarcity of supplies, it was a precept that they must follow their leader whether they wanted to or not. In this instance they had fought it out with the Japs to protect Bruce's take-off; now that he was gone, they had no reason to continue the skirmish.

Ann heard Captain Gabriel shout something, and a moment later the landing strip was empty of men. Except for the four or five who lay where they had fallen and would never rise again, the field was deserted. She had seen the guerrillas melt into the surrounding trees like shadows.

Even those who carried their wounded comrades had moved so quickly and silently that it seemed to Ann almost that they had disappeared into thin air.

Phillips and José were at her side and were pulling her to her feet before she realized that she, too, must obey the order to run. She glanced back once, saw that the Japs had already emerged into the open, and suddenly her one impulse was to get away, to hide from those stunted, ugly little men whose one impulse was to kill. Phillips did not let go her arm; he dragged her relentlessly along with him through the strip of underbrush and out into the clearing beyond, which was now empty. José preceded them, evidently following some prearranged course of action. He did not stop for a moment within the clearing, not even to look toward the path from the landing strip where he might expect to see the Japs approaching. He plunged into the depths of the jungle beyond, avoiding the trail that led from the mountain and striking out into a tangle of matted vines and underbrush.

It was happening so quickly, this flight from the enemy, that Ann had no time to wonder where José might be leading them or what his ultimate plan might be. She even forgot the rest of the guerrillas, Bianca, and the two men, Larson and Walters, whom she had last seen just before Bruce took off. Her only impulse was to get as far as possible from the Jap soldiers, to put as much space as her strength allowed between herself and them. She did not need Phillips' hand upon her arm to urge her on, though she was soon grateful for the help and support it lent her. Once she fell forward, stumbling over a hidden root, and it was he who hauled her to her feet.

"Thanks." The word was only a gasp and it seemed to be wrung from her with her last ounce of energy.

"Take it easy, try not to make any noise."

Phillips' warning almost made her laugh; a sense of wild hysteria gripped her. Not make any noise, take it

easy! How was it possible to do either? The bushes grew so thickly that they had to force their way through them and the noise of their progress seemed deafening in her ears. The Japs might be right at their heels and hearing the sound of every footstep.

Phillips shook her arm none too gently. "Watch José," he said. "Follow just where he goes. Don't worry about the Japs; they didn't see where we went and they'd never go off the trail to look for any of us."

Reassured by Phillips' words, Ann turned her attention to José. He was moving forward up the steep side of the mountain as quickly and noiselessly as a cat. No movement of the bushes betrayed his path, no crackle of breaking twigs showed where his footsteps had fallen. She saw that he slipped beneath the overhanging branches and vines, scarcely touching them; that he walked almost without lifting his feet. It became a game to follow him now; she imitated his every motion, stooping as he did, placing her feet in the same way, and keeping up with the swift pace he set. It required concentration to do this, a forcing of her mind that drove every other thought from her. She had been conscious before of the voices of the Japs in the clearing behind them, or of the occasional crack of a rifle. Now these sounds were blotted out in the single purpose of watching and repeating José's every motion.

She had no idea how long they kept up this hurried flight, how far they had gone up the mountain, when José suddenly turned back to her, waved his hand in a beckoning gesture, and instantly disappeared. For one second she hesitated, felt Phillips push her from behind, and then stepped forward. She found herself staring down into a black hole, a hole that seemed to plunge straight down into the earth between the rocks that surrounded it. Then José's face appeared from the depths of darkness below. He held up his hand to assist her.

"Come," he said as casually as though he were inviting

her to enter his house for a social call. "There are steps; it is easy."

She saw the rough steps cut into the rock then and placed one foot on the first one. With José to guide her she continued on into the blackness below, feeling her way down the half dozen steps. She could see nothing when she reached the bottom of the flight, for a tunnel closed over her and only a faint gleam of light glowed from the entrance above them. She heard Phillips' stumbling footsteps behind her, then his voice muttering something as his head struck the hard surface of the tunnel ceiling.

"Where in—" he began, but José cut him short.

"Wait," he commanded. "I must close over the entrance."

He squeezed past Ann and Phillips and they heard his feet on the rock steps. A moment later even the dim light from above was shut off and they were in complete darkness.

"Phillips!" Ann's voice sounded like a shout in her ears, though she was speaking scarcely above a whisper. She reached out and clutched his arm, grateful for the friendly warmth of his fingers as they closed over hers. "Phillips, where are we?"

"It's okay," he said quickly. "José knows what he's doing. He has his orders from Gabriel and I have mine from Captain Mitchell."

"Bruce! Bruce gave you orders!" Ann's voice was now loud with surprise.

"He told me to take care of you," replied Phillips quietly. "That was the last thing he said to me when we stowed Vannelli in the plane. He wanted you to come, didn't he?"

"Yes, no—I mean I told him about Vannelli."

"I know. It's okay. He understands and so do I. It was a swell thing for you to do."

Suddenly Ann's spirits lifted. To have Phillips praise

her, to know that he understood and admired her action in getting Vannelli out on the plane, meant a great deal to her. She knew Phillips did not bestow praise lightly or undeservedly and that he meant what he said.

"I had to do it," she said. But José cut the conversation abruptly. She heard his steps returning, and a moment later he pushed past her once more.

"Come," he said and took Ann by the hand. "Keep low, do not strike your head above."

His warning was unnecessary. Even without seeing Ann felt that the tunnel was low and narrow; it was as though she were walking in some underground prison that was closing in on her and might smother her at any moment. The air was close with a rank smell of dampness and decay which proved that no sun or light had ever entered here. She held her breath, hating to breathe in that deathly atmosphere.

She had no way of estimating the length of the tunnel, but it could not have been long. They began to climb soon after leaving the entrance, making their way on hands and knees up a rough surface of rock. Just as Ann began to believe they were never to find their way out of this confining space, José gave an exclamation of satisfaction and immediately after she felt his boots in her face.

"Go slow, wait," he muttered.

She heard José's hands fumbling at something, then a flood of sunshine burst over her. For a moment its brightness blinded her and she closed her eyes. Before she opened them, she heard José scrambling forward once more, then he reached back to pull her up beside him. Feeling like a mole that is emerging from its winter hibernation, Ann took a few steps forward and found herself standing on a flat surface of rock. Above her head and on all sides, but one, was this same gray wall of rock. She was in a cave, a deep hollow in the mountain, whose only means of access must be the tunnel at the back.

But Ann was not interested in the cave itself; it was that one open space which admitted sunshine and air that attracted her. She went toward it as a moth to the candle, drawn by an overpowering urge to breathe deeply of that glorious golden air. The cave was about thirty feet deep, narrow at its mouth and widening out at the place where the tunnel entered. She reached the mouth, took another step forward, and then drew back with a sharp cry of alarm. There was nothing beyond, nothing but the open world. The rock dropped in a sheer cliff straight to the jungle below; for three hundred feet it was nothing but a flat surface of barren rock. A few stunted bushes and vines that grew about the mouth of the cave hid the opening from enemy eyes. It was a perfect hide-out, invisible from the air above and the earth below. Except for the tunnel, whose entrance was hidden, there was no way of reaching it.

In spite of the shock that the precipice had given her, Ann felt suddenly that she was safe, that nothing could harm her here, no enemy could find her. She turned to Phillips who had come up beside her and smiled.

"Look," she said, "look out there!" She pointed out across the stretch of jungle at the foot of the cliff, straight out toward the sea, a shining expanse of blue beyond the green below. "Isn't it wonderful! You can see to the end of the world."

"Some part of it anyway," he admitted with a grin. "Who'd think José had a place like this up his sleeve. What a lookout! Wonder what part of the coast that is." He leaned forward, trying to see along the coastline; but it stretched smooth and blank of identifying projections as far as the eye could see in either direction.

"It's the same sea we saw before," said Ann. "The same one that nearly finished us. We must have been down in that jungle there," she gestured below with a sweep of her hand, "when we first landed."

"A bit more to the south I'd say," he replied slowly.

Unconsciously both had taken it for granted that it was no use to ask José where they were. They realized that this cave was a closely guarded secret, that they were privileged to be here. He would never give them its exact position in relation to the coast, no matter how much he trusted them.

He came up beside them and announced, "We eat now!"

"Eat!" Ann had forgotten what it was to be hungry, what it was to taste food. She had been too busy caring for Vannelli and the wounded guerrillas earlier that day to think of food, and the rapid confusion of the events that followed had made eating the last thing she wanted to consider. It seemed a lifetime since she had awakened that morning; too much had happened, too many changes had taken place for her to grasp the sequence of events. Already the realization that Bruce had been with her only a short time before was beginning to assume the vague quality of a dream. Had she really seen him, had he really held her in his arms and had she heard his voice? He was gone; this knowledge was the only reality.

Her thoughts had taken her away from the present, and Phillips spoke to her twice to attract her attention.

"Food," he repeated. "Didn't you hear José mention it?"

Ann lifted her head, stared at him a moment and then remembered that she was hungry. "Where is it? How did José find anything to eat here?"

"Food here always," said José. "This place always kept in readiness for our men." He pointed to the rear of the cave and Ann saw that a cavity had been cut from the rock there, a hole that served as a larder and general supply cache. She could see the handles of three rifles, a small case of ammunition, and boxes of flour and other prepared foodstuffs.

"Food, real food!" she exclaimed. "How in the world

did it get here?" She reached out and took a box of dried fruit from the cavity. It bore a well-known American trade-mark and Ann stared at it as though fascinated. This was her first contact with anything that had been familiar to her before she had been thrust into this fantastic adventure, and the homely little box seemed like a message from home. She held it tightly in both hands as though it were infinitely precious.

Phillips understood her, for he, too, was looking at the box with the eyes of remembrance. José, however, had no such sentiment. He took the box from her and tore it open.

"Eat," he commanded, giving her a handful of the fruit. "Water here, too. Spring in back of cave." He gestured toward a thin trickle of water that ran down the rock near the cache and formed a small pool in one corner.

Ann had not noticed the water before; now its presence gave added proof of the perfection of the cave as a hide-out. With food and water, one could remain here indefinitely.

"Food brought in by plane," said José suddenly, evidently recalling Ann's first question. "Food, medical supplies, all sent by American friends."

"Good heavens, that box of things Bruce brought," exclaimed Ann. "I'd hate to have the Japs get hold of those medical supplies." She stopped and turned on José. "Where are the wounded men—the ones that were hurt just now? I ought to help them." She had risen to her feet in her excitement.

But José was unmoved by her distress. "They will come," he announced quietly. "They will come and bring the medicine box. It is arranged. This is your hospital."

"Hospital! All arranged? But how did you have time, how did you know the Japs would come to the camp and drive us out?"

José merely looked at her in a dispassionate way that suddenly made her realize the childishness of her ques-

tions. In this guerrilla warfare, everything was "arranged," there was never anything left to chance. Every possible contingency was provided for, even to the care of the wounded. She had been appointed, without her knowledge, as the official nurse of the group, and there was apparently no thought of her refusing to do her duty. Of course she had no idea of not doing everything in her power to help them, but she could not help but wish they had told her something of her job before now.

"I'll be glad to do anything I can," she said finally. "If I could get blankets and some grass or leaves to use for pallets, we could take care of a good many wounded here." She was speaking half to herself, looking about the cave and taking mental notes of the most advantageous places to set up her row of "hospital beds."

"That is what we do now," replied José, still speaking as though what he said were the most natural announcement in the world. "We have eaten, now we prepare for the wounded. They will arrive shortly; we have not much time." In the space of seconds he had swept all signs of their scanty meal back into the cavity and had risen to his feet. "We must collect palm fronds, branches for the cots. They bring blankets and medical box with the wounded."

"They? Who are they? Captain Gabriel?" Ann could not resist the questions, though she had little hope of a reply.

She was not mistaken. José had not even bothered to listen to her. Once more he led them through the tunnel and out to the open world. The tunnel entrance was behind the cave, halfway up the jutting mountain the seaward side of which formed the bare cliff wall. The landward side was covered with jungle growth and there was ample material from which they might select branches, leaves, and grass for the improvised cots. Ann was soon as busy as the two men in carrying armfuls of such stuff into the cave. It was difficult to make one's way through the

narrow tunnel with such burdens, but, animated by a sense of necessity, they persevered.

Ann had made three toilsome trips up through the tunnel, had arranged the materials in heaps along the back of the cave, before she took time out to rest a moment. Her days of insufficient food, exhaustion, and ever-present fear had told on her and she was soon feeling the effects of these drains on her energy. She sat down on a heap of dry leaves and rested her chin on her hands. Suddenly all this work they were doing seemed so useless, so hopeless. How could she expect to do any good to the wounded with the limited supplies at her command? She had no one to help her, no one to turn to. She was a nurse, not a doctor. She had no real medical or surgical knowledge to fall back on. She knew in what condition the wounded would be brought to her; the sort of treatment they would need. It was impossible that she be of any real help; she could only— The train of hopeless thought was broken abruptly.

She had not seen Phillips return to the cave. Until he dropped a bundle of leaves near her feet, she had thought she was alone with her own sense of inadequacy and self-fear. She glanced up and saw that he was looking at her, saw that he understood exactly what she was thinking.

"Any skilled medical care will help them more than you realize," he said, falling naturally into her train of thought. "They will be grateful. It is why you are here."

"I know." Ann was suddenly humble.

"Captain Mitchell said that," said Phillips. He spoke more sternly than he ever had spoken before to Ann. "I heard him say, 'She will be useful here. She will have a job to do.'"

"Bruce said that?" Ann had risen to her feet and was staring eagerly into Phillips' eyes. "He said that?"

"We haven't had much chance to talk since he left," returned Phillips gently. "I think at the last he felt you were right to stay; that you had work to do for these men. He

said something else, too. He said he would come back for you—soon.”

“Come back? Soon? But how will he find me? How can he?”

Phillips shook his head. “I can’t tell you that. I don’t know. But you must remember what General MacArthur promised the Filipinos. He said he would return.”

He had no chance to go on. José’s head appeared at the mouth of the tunnel and he cried sharply, “They come! They are here.”

For a moment of frantic terror Ann thought he meant that the Japs had discovered their hideout, that they were even now approaching to blast them out of their safe retreat. The single word “Japs!” escaped her without her conscious volition.

José’s reaction was startling. “Japs!” He fairly snarled the words. Then he spat contemptuously on the floor of the cave. “The cowards stay only on the trails and traveled places. They dare not come into the jungle. We are safe here. I have said so. It is the wounded who come.”

Ann had almost forgotten for whom they had worked to prepare the cave. Phillips’ mention of General MacArthur’s promise had driven all thought of the wounded from her mind. Now she remembered the work that lay before her and was ashamed of her momentary lapse.

“I am ready for them,” she said quietly. “Ask the men to bring the blankets in first, please.” Suddenly she was in complete control of herself and the situation. She was to be in charge of this improvised hospital; she must assume all responsibility for it. It was a challenge to her years of nursing experience and, no matter what the difficulties, she was prepared to overcome them to the best of her knowledge. She knew her limitations, but in this instance they acted as a spur to force her beyond her skill.

A bundle of tattered blankets was thrust up through the tunnel entrance and she and Phillips spread them over the

heaps of grass and leaves. Before they had finished, the first man was half-pulled, half-shoved up through the narrow tunnel. This last violent and unavoidable handling of the wounded was for them the hardest part of the flight from camp. This first man gave a scream of pain as he was laid none too gently at Ann's feet, and it was all she could do to suppress a rebuke to the two men who had brought him there. She realized in time that they could not help this rough handling in the narrow passageway, but the man's suffering was heart-breaking.

"The medical supplies? Quick, Phillips, the box!" It was lying near the entrance where one of the bearers had left it just before the first casualty was brought in. "Look here," she decided swiftly. "I'll give a morphine injection to all of them as they come in. Then you carry them to the cots. Morphine can't hurt any of them in their condition."

She had got out the syrettes as she spoke and quickly injected morphine into the screaming man's arm. She noted the gaping wound in his leg, a raw mass of broken flesh. He needed surgical care; what could she do to help him as he ought to be helped? But she put the thought out of her mind. She must not let her doubts overcome her. No matter what the nature of the men's wounds, she was the only trained person there with any knowledge of what to do. She must do her best, her utmost, to relieve their suffering and hope that her courage would not fail her.

She scarcely knew how many men were brought to her for care. The floor of the cave seemed to be covered with them before José announced that the last had arrived. They had all received the morphine dose, no matter what the nature of their wounds, for Ann realized that quick relief from pain would help them more than anything else now. Phillips and Walters, who seemed to have appeared from nowhere, had placed them on the blanketed cots. They were quiet now, dulled into apathy by the mor-

phine. She had accomplished one thing at least, she told herself. The sharpest of their pain was gone.

"How many?" she asked Phillips, as she went to the first of the cots in the row across the back of the cave.

"Six," he replied. "They're in pretty bad shape. What can Walters and I do to help?"

"Six!" Ann had thought there were a dozen at least, but she remembered the original number of the guerrilla band and realized that these six represented almost half of the group. That valiant stand on the landing strip to protect Bruce's plane had cut heavily into their strength.

"Where's Larson?" she demanded. She was bending over the medical kit, selecting bandages and drugs to begin her real work.

Walters answered, but he seemed to speak reluctantly. "He's gone with—well, he and Gabriel and most of the guerrillas have gone on down to the coast." He stopped again, then burst forth angrily, "Something's up! Gabriel's up to something."

"Gone!" Ann sat back on her heels and stared at Walters. "Are we the only ones left here? Did Bianca go with them too?"

He nodded. "We, and José, and a couple of others who are guarding the trail down at the foot of the mountain are the only ones here. The wounded have been left for us to take care of."

"And we'd better do it." It was Phillips' quiet voice that recalled Ann to her duty. Once more she busied herself in selecting materials and supplies from the kit. The two hours that followed were a period of time that afterward Ann was to recall as a sort of waking nightmare. Though she had not known it at the time, the Japs had been using hand grenades as well as rifles in their attack on the landing strip. The wounds resulting from the grenades were far more difficult to attend than the relatively clean bullet wounds. The former tore gaping holes

in the flesh, raw, jagged wounds that in most cases needed surgical treatment. She had a surgeon's kit in the supply box, but never having used the materials before she dreaded doing so now. But necessity makes its own laws and, having cleaned the wounds, she sewed many of them with the surgeon's needle. When they had been sprinkled with sulfa powder and bandaged she had done all that lay in her power. She hated to think what a surgeon would say of her work, but there was no use in thinking of that now.

"We'll have to probe for the bullets with these three," she said as she surveyed the last of her patients. "There's a probe here." She bent over the first man. "Get the hypo," she directed Phillips. "I'll have to give more morphine if he rouses."

The dark hole where the bullet had entered was in the man's shoulder. There was no other wound, so she knew the bullet was embedded somewhere behind that bleeding hole. The man moaned as she inserted the probe, but did not awaken from his drugged sleep. The instrument struck the metal almost at once and with a small pair of tweezers she drew it forth, staring at it with unbelieving eyes. It had never occurred to her that she would find it so easily, and a sudden sense of self-confidence swept over her. It was not as difficult as she had imagined; she had found the bullet; she could do anything!

But her self-congratulation came too soon. The second man's wound was in his stomach and, as she probed for the bullet, a gush of blood from the jagged hole stained her hand with crimson. She tried to staunch the flow; abandoned the search for the bullet and applied a guaze pack. But it was no use. The hemorrhage could not be stopped, and within the space of minutes the man was dead. Whether her unskilled probing for the bullet had caused his death or whether it was bound to happen anyway, Ann had no means of knowing. But she was too

humbled by the event to have any further reason to congratulate herself. The man's death restored her to a sense of proportion and showed her only too plainly the limits of her skill.

She had better luck with the last patient and found the bullet without trouble. By the time she had bandaged the wound, Walters and Phillips had taken the first casualty from the cave. She knew they would bury him somewhere; that this man who had fought to free his country from the hated enemy was doomed to lie forever on this lonely mountain top. She could not get the thought out of her mind that his death was in some way her fault. He had been her patient and she had not saved him.

She got to her feet and looked down the row of rough cots. "You'll be all right," she promised herself. "I'll not let any of you—"

The sentence was never completed. A shuddering blast of sound shook the very rock under her feet. Behind the noise of explosion was a steady roar, a familiar hum of motors that came from the sky above. For a second Ann could not move. The detonation of bursting bombs came again, this time much nearer. She heard Phillips' voice shouting and through the numbness of her terror realized that he had re-entered the cave and was running past her to the entrance that overlooked the mountain. Scarcely conscious of what she did, she followed him, her feet propelling her forward without any will of her own.

She saw them then, knew the reason for Phillips' shout, and realized that it had been a cry of triumph. The noise of planes was deafening as she reached the mouth of the cave. They were spread across the sky just above the mountain top like a flight of gigantic birds, all headed in one direction toward the coastline. It was there the bombs were striking; at a point some distance up the coast. Ann could see the places where they struck before the sound of their explosion reached her ears. She shut

her eyes and looked again. No, she had not been mistaken. She had seen them, seen those white stars on the under wing of each plane and knew them for what they were. They were American planes, hundreds of them, it seemed to her exulting sight, and they were blasting at this Jap-held island. It could mean only one thing!

But she did not have time to clarify her thought. A new and nearer sound, spaced between the crash of bombs, reached her ears. It was the noise of rifle fire, and it came from the mountain trail behind them.

16

PHILLIPS heard it as soon as she and understood the significance of the exchange of rifle fire. It increased in a few seconds they paused to listen; then he whirled about and snatched a rifle from the heap of firearms that lay on the floor. They were rifles the guerrillas had taken from the Jap ammunition depot, and Ann saw him pause a moment and stare at the strange weapon with a look of doubt.

"There," cried Ann, sensing the reason for his hesitation. She ran forward and reached into the cavity where José kept his supplies. "I saw him put them there," she explained, as she handed him a cartridge belt. "It's a Jap one, so the bullets will fit."

But Phillips had not waited for her explanation. With a muttered word of thanks, he snatched the belt and disappeared down through the tunnel. He knew that the guards with José and Walters were shooting it out down on the trail, possibly with a large Jap patrol. They would be outnumbered without a doubt, but he did not hesitate.

The moment he was gone Ann was afraid; everything

contributed to her fears. Even the knowledge that the bombardment outside was due to American planes did not comfort her. The noise in itself was frightening; it made all sense of reason desert her and only the terror of sound was left. She was alone with five helpless men. Her place was with them; she knew that. But the knowledge of the nearness of the enemy, the fact that she could not see them and that the bursts of rifle fire was increasing in frequency, made her feel like a trapped animal. What could she do? There must be something she could do to be useful. Her fingers closed around the butt of a revolver that lay with the other weapons. It was a small revolver; and the butt fitted easily into her palm. If the guerrillas should be overcome, if the Japs should find the tunnel entrance— Her mind tried to cling to these drifting thoughts. She did not form them consciously; they came to her as though some outside voice were dropping them into her brain.

She glanced at the row of men. It was her first duty to think of them, to protect them in case the Japs overcame the few men guarding the cave. If she were to go down to the tunnel entrance to meet the enemy before he could reach the cave, she might serve them best. At all costs the secret of the cave must be preserved. The life of these five men depended on it. She had lost one patient; these that remained should never die for fault of hers. There was no one to advise her as to the best method of protecting the cave. But some sense within her told her that, if she was to be of any real help, she must be in a position to use the weapon in her hand and at the same time protect the secret of the tunnel entrance.

Almost before this idea was fully formulated in her mind, she was slipping, stumbling, falling down the narrow steepness of the tunnel. She had made this trip several times, but never with the certain knowledge in her heart that danger lay so near the outer entrance. She saw

the faint glow of daylight around the edges of the stone that covered the entrance and hesitated. If she lifted it, what would she find outside? The trail was over a hundred feet down the mountain; a tangle of jungle growth was between her and the sound of rifle fire. The chances of a Jap's being just outside were slim, but the dread of the unknown froze her into immobility. Several minutes passed. The noise of the bombing planes and the roar of the bursting bombs was fainter down here; it was only a background of earth-shaking sound against the nearer, sharper noise of the rifles.

Slowly, cautiously, she raised one corner of the stone and brushed away the tangle of vines that covered it. There was nothing there; only the familiar, brilliant green of the crowding jungle trees and plants, now too commonplace to seem anything but ordinary and almost comforting. The crack of rifles was louder now; it seemed to be nearer and more ominous. Occasionally a shout, the cry of a human voice, cut through the clatter of sound.

She must not stay so near the entrance. If she was to be of any real service, she must hide herself outside the tunnel among those thick bushes at a point where she could see the tunnel entrance and prevent anyone from entering it. She gave the stone a heave, slipped out, and hurriedly pulled the vines over the stone. A huge matted bush grew near by, and in the space of seconds Ann was concealed within its protecting branches. She crouched down and held her breath. It was not a moment too soon. Even before she had settled herself to watch and listen, the snap of a breaking branch sounded on her eardrums like the report of a rifle. It was the noise of someone coming toward her, someone who was trying to approach cautiously, for that one sound was all that betrayed his presence.

Ann's fingers, ice-cold with a numbing fear, tried to grip the revolver more tightly. But they were wet with perspiration and she could not force them to a tighter

hold. Suddenly the weapon seemed enormously heavy, too much for her strength. She had never shot a revolver; she knew nothing of its mechanism except the one cardinal necessity. One pointed the muzzle at one's enemy and pulled the trigger. Her forefinger reached forward and squeezed the trigger gently; she heard a tiny click and instantly pulled her finger away, glancing down to the ugly weapon with startled eyes.

When she looked up a moment later, her breath stopped in her throat as though she were being strangled. A man stood not five feet from her just beside the bush. It was not his sudden appearance that startled her, though that was terrifying enough; it was not the fact that he was not a Jap and not one of the guerrillas. It was the unbelievable, appalling knowledge that she knew this man; she had seen him before. In the space of a few whirling seconds she tried to think why she recognized him. She stared at him from her hiding place, noting the ragged clothing he wore, the tattered Army shirt and the threadbare trousers. But it was his face that held her, a face so gaunt, so gray with suffering and starvation, that the bones seemed about to pierce the skin.

Suddenly the man lifted his head and turned to look down the way he had come. Some noise may have warned him that someone was coming, for his lips tightened and he raised his hand to his cheek. It was that characteristic gesture that told Ann who he was. When was it? Three years ago that she had last seen him lift his hand and rub his cheek this way? He had been near her then, standing beside her at an operating table in a canvas hospital tent. He had just finished an operation and, ripping off his rubber gloves, he had lifted his hand to his cheek and—

"Dr. Merrit!" Ann did not realize that she shouted his name, did not think what effect this cry would have on him. In the overwhelming excitement of her discovery,

she had risen impulsively to her feet. "Dr. Merrit," she cried again.

He was not prepared for the shock of her sudden appearance. She had not thought what this repetition of his name could do to a man who had thought himself alone. He stared at her for a moment, took a single step forward, and fell at her feet as though he were dead. She knew then what she had done and reproached herself bitterly. Somehow or other she should have announced her presence in a way that would not have shocked him. She knelt down and turned him over so that he lay on his back. Dr. Merrit had been a heavy man when she last saw him, now he was so emaciated that he was scarcely any heavier than she.

Ann did not have to be told what had happened to him. She knew that Dr. Merrit had never been heard from since that last hurried flight from Bataan. They had worked together in an Army hospital there. She had been evacuated with the rest when the word came that Bataan must be abandoned, but Dr. Merrit had not arrived at Corregidor with the others. Now she knew why; he had been captured by the Japs and been a prisoner for all these three long years. As she looked down at his skeleton body, at the lines of privation, suffering, and starvation that marked his gaunt face, Ann felt a surge of bitter anger against the enemy. She had hated them before, had had ample reason to do so, but this visual evidence of their treatment of prisoners, men helpless to defend themselves against brutality, was the culmination of all her hatred.

She had reached for his wrist to feel his pulse, when a loud outcry from the direction of the trail below made her realize that she had forgotten the presence of danger, that the Japs may have been following Dr. Merrit. Within the space of seconds she had dragged the unconscious doctor under the edge of the bush and had covered him with the loose dead foliage that littered the ground. But before she could conceal herself, she heard Phillips shouting some-

thing and his words told her that all necessity for hiding was gone.

"Get them up to the cave," he was calling. "We got the last of the patrol. Hurry, before any more turn up."

There was an answering shout of assent and then a burst of talking. Obviously the men below knew there was no longer any reason for silence or concealment. They had shot it out with the enemy and won.

"Phillips, Phillips!" Ann's voice was almost a plea. "Come here, come here, quick!"

He was not far away; she heard the sound of his crackling footsteps, and even as they came nearer she realized something else. She could not be hearing them so clearly if all other sounds had not ceased. Suddenly the jungle seemed deathly still, to be holding its breath after the shock of its punishment from the sky. The planes had gone, and she had not known when the sound of the bombardment had stopped. Now only the snap of twigs under Phillips' feet broke the immense silence, an infinitesimal noise against the breathless quiet of the jungle.

"What the devil are you doing out here?" He sounded angry. Then he saw the revolver she still held clutched in her right hand and understood. "I get it," he went on, "but I'm not sure it was for the best."

"Were they prisoners?" Ann asked the question though she already knew the answer.

"Sure, but how—?" He had no chance to finish, for Ann bent down and pulled the covering from the unconscious man. Phillips looked at him a moment and then at Ann as though asking for an explanation.

"I know him. It's Dr. Merrit from Bataan. He was just standing there and— Where did they come from?" Her words fell over one another in her excitement. The incredible fact that Dr. Merrit had appeared as if from nowhere, that he should be alive after all these years of

horror in a Jap prison camp, was almost too much for her to comprehend.

"You know him?" Phillips was nearly as excited as she. He stepped forward to look down at the unconscious man. "He's all right, isn't he?"

"I hope so. It was my fault he fainted. But Phillips, what happened down there? Are there any more of them?"

"About a dozen. The Japs must have been moving them from a prison camp near here. Gabriel said once that there was one near by. I don't get the reason for moving them or why there were so few. Unless they've got the wind up." He shook his head. "I don't get it," he repeated.

But Ann was scarcely listening to him. The sound of voices from the direction of the trail had grown louder; she knew that the prisoners were being brought up to the cave and the doctor's condition told her something else. All these men would need food and rest; it was up to her to do something for them.

"Help me get Dr. Merrit up into the cave," she said. "All of them will need food." Now that she had said the word "food" aloud, she realized with a pang of dismay that the supply in the cave would not be sufficient for all of them. It was scarcely enough for those already there, let alone a dozen newcomers.

"How can we feed them?" Her voice betrayed the depths of her despair. These men had been freed after three years of starvation. They were among friends once more, and these friends could do so little to help them. She had been too preoccupied with this agonizing knowledge of the cave's inadequacy as a shelter to note that the sound of voices had come nearer. The prisoners, escorted by Walters and the two guerrillas, were at the tunnel entrance before she was aware of their approach. One look at the little group of men, men who bore the same stamp of privation and hardship as Dr. Merrit, convinced her of

one thing; no matter who went without, these men would have all the stores the cave could provide.

She noticed how the men stared at her. They said nothing for a moment. Their expressions told as plainly as words what they were thinking. What was an American girl doing on this lonely mountain top with the guerrillas? She had grown so accustomed to living as she was that for a second she did not understand their bewilderment. She ought to explain; she ought to tell them why she was here. But how could she—Phillips' voice cut through her hurried thoughts.

"Miss Bartlett is a Navy Nurse," she heard him say. "She landed here with several men and myself from a raft. We've been here almost a week."

"A week!" The exclamation came from one of the group and it needed no explanation. The man who spoke and his companions had spent three years here; a week was a mere moment in that infinity of time.

"We have food in the cave," cried Ann. "Walters, you and Phillips get Dr. Merrit up through the tunnel. I'll go ahead."

One of the guerrillas had already lifted aside the stone and Ann had disappeared down the rough flight of steps that led to the cave. By the time the first of the men had come after her, she had already got out all the food stores that the cave afforded. She had no thought of keeping back anything for either the patients or those who guarded the cave. The prisoners were hungry; they should be fed. This was the one idea that animated her every thought and act now.

Dr. Merrit had recovered from his faint by the time he was carried into the cave. Insisting that he was quite all right, he sat down and leaned against the wall. From time to time Ann noticed that he looked at her in a way that showed how much her presence astounded him; he could not seem to understand why she should be here. But Ann

was too busy handing out food and water to the men to have time for an explanation then. It was not until every man had been provided with refreshment that she went toward the doctor and sat down beside him. None of the erstwhile prisoners had spoken a word of their experience in the Jap camp; they seemed bewildered by their release, too overcome to comprehend their good fortune. They took what food Ann handed them, stared at it as though they had never seen anything like it before, and then began to eat, slowly at first, then with the eagerness of the half-starved. It was a pitiful, terrible sight to see the remembered horror in their eyes. Almost worse than the effect of imprisonment on their physical condition was this evidence of the scars on their spirit.

Ann turned to Dr. Merrit and in a low voice told him as much of the story of how she had come there as she thought would help him to understand her presence. The food he had eaten had revived him and she knew that he now accepted her, not as a figment of his imagination, but as a flesh-and-blood reality.

"It's amazing," he said at last. "When you stood up and spoke to me—" He paused and shook his head. "I thought I'd really cracked at last. Those years in camp—" He shut his lips. That unfinished sentence was the only reference to those three years that Ann or the others ever heard from any of the prisoners. No one questioned them; by natural instinct Ann, Phillips, and the rest knew that it was not something one spoke about. They had only to look into the men's faces to know the story of their life in the Jap prison camp; it was a story too ugly to be told.

Ann reached out and took the doctor's hand in a firm grip. "I'm here all right," she said, trying to speak with a lightness she did not feel. "I can't tell you how it makes me feel to see you again like—" She stopped suddenly.

"We all look like the devil," he finished. "Thank heaven for your patrol or whatever it was that cracked

down on the Japs. They were moving us—only a dozen of us; and why we were chosen from the hundreds at camp I'll never know. We'd been on the march two days through the jungle with no idea where they were taking us. The moment your men fired a shot at the Japs I dived off the trail and found you."

"I think I know why we were taken out of camp," said one of the men. "We are all Army officers and they must have thought us more important than the poor devils they left behind. But they've got excited about something. These recent bombardments mean only one thing, and they understand it. The moment the invasion begins those Japs are going to run like rabbits."

Ann had known in the back of her mind that the bombardment from the American planes meant that an invasion in force must follow sometime, but this first spoken mention of it acted like a spur to her imagination. The years of Jap occupation were drawing to a close; the last act of the horrible drama was beginning, and she was not going to play a part in it. There must be something she could do to help. She got to her feet, unable to sit still with this tremendous knowledge firing her brain. Then she saw the men around her: the guerrillas she had so recently cared for, the prisoners, scarred with years of suffering. She turned back to her place near Dr. Merrit and sat down once more. Her duty was here; it was in this lonely mountain cave that she could best serve the cause of liberation.

Phillips looked at her and grinned. He had always understood her; he knew now what she had been thinking.

"We won't be staying here long," he said.

A sound came from the direction of the tunnel. They heard footsteps approaching, hurried footsteps that seemed to carry in each step the weight of important tidings.

The two guerrillas had snatched their rifles. Their

training had taught them to trust nothing and no one. This newcomer might be an enemy, no matter how unlikely it was that he would know the secret of the cave. But it was one of their men who appeared a moment later in the entrance; a man who was Captain Gabriel's most trusted aide. He stared for a second at the group of prisoners, then seemed to accept their presence entirely as a matter of course.

He said something in rapid Spanish, addressing himself to José, then stopped, obviously waiting for him to translate his message to the Americans. But José was evidently too astonished at what he said to respond immediately. He stared at the man, then in a sharp voice said something that must have made an impression on the newcomer, for he glanced at the strange assortment of people in the cave, shrugged his shoulders, and appeared to resign himself to José's will.

"What does he say, José?" asked Phillips, after a moment during which José had tried, somewhat unsuccessfully, to conceal his triumph at having his own way.

José shot a look of rebuke at the aide and said scornfully, "He brings a message from Captain Gabriel that we are to join him at once near the coast. I asked him how we are to carry five wounded men along the trail at night."

"Night!" Ann sat upright with a start and looked toward the entrance to the cave. She saw that the sun was fading rapidly, and even as she watched the patch of sky lost its reddish glow and became gray. "Night, why it's all happened in one day!"

Rapidly her thoughts swept backward. Had it been that very morning that she had said good-by to Bruce, that she had seen his plane lift above the landing strip and head south? The flight from camp, their arrival at the cave, and her care of the wounded—all these chaotic events had occurred in the brief span of a single day. It had been noon when they had reached the cave; she remembered that, for

it had been the last time she had looked at her watch. She glanced down at it now and saw that it was nearly six o'clock. Six hours—where had they gone? Too much had happened for her to clarify all these swiftly moving turns of fortune. She felt that her brain was whirling like a top, and she forced herself to listen to what José and Phillips were saying in order to steady herself.

“—when it gets light,” she heard José saying. “I know when we must be at the rendezvous, and we shall be there in time.”

“What are they talking about?” she whispered to Dr. Merrit. “Rendezvous with whom?”

Dr. Merrit had been half asleep, and now he lifted his head and looked at her with a puzzled frown. “I didn’t hear what he said,” he replied wearily. “Miss Bartlett, I think, if we are not to move immediately, that my friends and I should—” He did not finish. Even in the midst of his sentence his head fell forward on his chest once more and he was asleep.

Ann felt an instant pang of remorse. She had fed the liberated prisoners, but she should have realized that they needed rest as well. With Phillips’ help she made Dr. Merrit more comfortable and then insisted that his companions lie down on the floor of the cave also and sleep.

“I’m sorry we haven’t any blankets,” she told one of the men. “But those wounded men need all that we have.”

“Blankets!” The man laughed harshly. “If you had seen the conditions in which we used to live! Blankets would be almost too much of a luxury. We will be fine. If we are to go on in the morning we’d best rest now.” He lay down and, like Dr. Merrit, was instantly asleep.

The hush that fell over the rows of sleeping men, the rapidly darkening sky, the sense of waiting for something that was to happen on the morrow, gave Ann a feeling that she was living in a dream world. The weird half-light that entered at the mouth of the cave made the figures of the

sleeping men seem unreal; it blurred them into a mass of shadows that had no outline. It darkened rapidly; soon she knew that she would be able to see nothing. She stood up and went to the medical kit. She had remembered a tiny flashlight in the box. They could not light a fire, she knew that, but this small beam of light could not be seen by marauding enemy planes.

José and Phillips were still talking in low voices as she snapped on the light and went down the row of men who lay on the improvised cots. She had nothing but water to offer them, and she wondered if she had been right to give all the food to the prisoners. She had done it on an impulse, but their condition had warranted her act.

She caught a single word of Phillips' conversation. It was a reference to "tomorrow," and she suddenly knew that she had done the right thing. The prisoners needed all their strength for the next day's march; the wounded men would be carried on stretchers and could forego food until their arrival at the mysterious rendezvous.

"Stretchers!" She said the word aloud, following her own train of thought. "José, how are we to carry these wounded? There aren't enough men to carry them."

"It is arranged." José spoke almost contemptuously and Ann did not press him for a further explanation. She was used to José's "arrangements" now; he had constantly assured her in the few days of their acquaintance that things were "arranged," and she had come to believe in what he said. Where the bearers and the stretchers were to come from she was too tired to think or care about. She went toward the entrance to the cave and looked up at the sky. It was spangled with stars, a brilliant glory of sparkling light that cast a glow over the spreading sea beyond the black line of the coast.

She lay down near the entrance where she could look up at this starry magnificence, and, resting her chin on her hands, looked upward.

The stars seemed very near. If she stretched out her hand, she could almost touch them, snatch a handful of those twinkling lights and bring them down to her. In the back of her mind, she heard the drone of José's and Phillips' voice going on and on. Occasionally she caught a word, only to forget it instantly. "Radio working," she heard José say once. "Message came that—" "She is to be there." But it was an effort to make sense out of all this. What difference did it make what they said? She was too tired to force her mind to concentrate. It was much more pleasant just to lie here and look at the stars, those stars that seemed a promise of hope. Tomorrow they would be safe; tomorrow they were to join Captain Gabriel and he would make everything all right. Her head fell upon her arms, her eyes closed. Once she jerked upright. She ought not to fall asleep. She ought to hear what José and Phillips were planning. Tomorrow was the day that— But she was asleep.

Someone stepped on her ankle; a shout seemed to split the air beside her ears. Ann opened her eyes and shut them again. The sun that flooded into the mouth of the cave blinded her. There was so much noise about her, so many people talking all at once, so much shouting, so many feet near where she lay. It was chaos, an upheaval of sound that made thought impossible. Someone stumbled over her foot and sat down with a thud, barely missing her head. She sat up to remonstrate with the offender and saw that it was Walters.

"What in the world are you doing?" she demanded. "You nearly smashed my head."

But he paid no attention to her. He was not even listening. He sat where he had fallen, looking out toward the sea, a look of something approaching exaltation in his eyes. She stared at him a moment, then swung around to see what he was seeing. The cave entrance was crowded with men. For a moment she saw nothing but a tangle of people,

all of them pushing to get a better view. She heard their voices, knew they were exulting as Walters was, but made nothing from their words. One of the men moved for an instant, a moment that gave her a quick and vivid picture of what lay beyond upon the sea.

She did not hear her own voice, did not even know she had cried out. Before she was conscious of moving, she was on her feet and pushing as hard as anyone to see that glorious spectacle in all its might and magnificence. Phillips reached back, caught her hand, and pulled her up before him. She saw it then, saw it in all its tremendous significance.

There beyond the green of the jungle, beyond the stretch of water near the coast, was a great armada of ships: massive carriers, battleships, destroyers, auxiliaries; ships of every class and kind protecting the fleet of transports that moved steadily, inexorably northward. They covered the sea, an endless flotilla of ships that seemed to have no end and no beginning. Above the armada, the noise of their motors drowned by the cries of the watchers in the cave, was a solid sheet of planes, hundreds of them, darkening the sky like a cloud.

Ann did not need to be told what this awesome spectacle meant, what its purpose was. They had come; the Americans had returned at last after three long years to free this island of Luzon from the hated enemy. She closed her eyes and felt the slow hot tears of joy run down her cheeks.

"A DAY to remember!"

She heard Phillips say the words, felt his fingers digging into her shoulders, unconscious of the strength of their grip.

"A day to remember," she repeated softly. "Oh, Phillips, I can't believe it's come at last. Remember when we left, remember how we escaped from Bataan when we hadn't any ships to get out in but one PT boat and—" She couldn't go on, but she did not need to. He knew what she meant. The contrast between that time three years ago and now was too overwhelming for expression, too great for comprehension. One had to see it, see with one's own eyes this mighty fleet, this powerful armada, to know what America had accomplished in three years.

Suddenly she was conscious that Dr. Merrit was standing by her staring in utter bewilderment at the incredible spectacle. "They said three times that our fleet was destroyed," she heard him mutter. "At the Coral Sea, at Midway, in the Marshalls. I couldn't believe it all, but this—Oh, heaven, that 'I am alive to see it!'" His voice caught and he turned away, pushing through the crowd of men. Ann caught a glimpse of his face and shut her eyes. It was too much for anyone to see the joy, incomprehension, and exultation in that gaunt and ravaged face. She knew what he felt; in a measure she was experiencing the same turmoil of emotion, but her feeling was as nothing compared to his.

"—and won't they catch hell," she heard Phillips saying when she was able to attend once more. "Hundreds of them, hundreds and thousands."

"Where are they headed? Phillips, where are they going and what day is it? I don't ever want to forget this day."

"Lingayen Gulf to the north of us. I can't remember the date."

"January ninth, 1945." It was one of the men who had come from the prison who spoke. He said the words in a way that made Ann understand that every day of his imprisonment had been counted, that each minute, each hour, had been checked off on their weary round so that never would he forget an instant of the time he had spent in prison.

It was José who broke the spell that held the watchers at the mouth of the cave. Nothing had ever surprised, upset, or excited José, and even this sight upon the sea left him entirely unmoved.

"Señor Phillips, Señor Phillips, we are losing time. We must prepare to leave." His voice came from the rear of the cave; he was the only person within it who was not trying to look out at the tremendous drama that was spread before them.

Phillips laughed and turned away. "He's right. We've got to hurry. Have the men come?" He was pushing his way through the crowd toward José as he spoke, and Ann suddenly knew to what other men he was referring. They would be those who were to carry the wounded on the day's journey. She followed Phillips, knowing that it would be her duty to help arrange for the transfer of the wounded to the stretchers.

"They are without," José was saying. "We must get them down through the tunnel now. El Capitan has given the order that we be at the rendezvous at noon."

Ann glanced at her watch. It was seven; five hours from now they were to be at the chosen meeting place. It would be somewhere nearer to the coast. She had heard this much of the plans from José, but why they must be there by noon seemed strange. What difference would it make when they got there? The invasion was beginning; the hour of liberation had come and the battle was in American hands.

She was busy with her patients as these thoughts went through her mind. Once she heard José say something to Phillips that puzzled her for a moment. It was something about "she is to go then." "She" could only mean herself, but there was no time to wonder what he meant now. The wounded men demanded her every thought and attention. José would not allow her to take time to change the dressings for her patients. The fact that she had nothing to give them to eat and had to assuage both their hunger and thirst with water added to her worries. There was only one thing she could do to relieve the worst sufferers and that was to give them another shot of morphine. The morning's journey would be a tremendous hardship for them, and the morphine was the only remedy that would lighten the agony of the next five hours.

When she had administered the morphine and wrapped each man securely in a blanket, she signaled José that they were ready to be carried out. As the first man was lifted from his cot a violent sound of bombardment shook the floor of the cave. It was as though every gun and every bomb from each ship or plane in that attacking force were going off at once. But Ann was used to the rocking explosion of bombs and gunfire now. For over a week she had lived with this havoc of sound almost constantly in her ears. Now she knew with certainty whence this fire-power came and it held no note of terror for her. Each bomb that fell, each shot that hit its mark, was another blow against the Japs and for freedom.

The noise was too great for her to hear what the men who still clustered at the mouth of the cave were saying, and she was too occupied in superintending the work of getting the patients out to attend them in any case. It was not until the last of the five men had been carried out that she had time for a last look toward the sea. Then she understood the reason for the shouts and exclamations that had reached her from time to time as she worked over her

patients. The sky over the sea was no longer blanketed with a fleet of planes flying in formation. The planes were turning, twisting, diving in the chaotic confusion of battle. She caught a glimpse of the Rising Sun insignia on the wings of several of these fighting planes and knew that the American force was beating off an enemy attack. The battle was nearly over when she reached the vantage point at the mouth of the cave. She saw a plane falling toward the sea, the sun glinting for a moment on the red circle under its wings before it burst into a mass of smoke and flame. Two more of the enemy craft fell, one diving headlong into the sea, the other catching fire in mid-air. There was a tremendous burst of black smoke near one of the ships, a spurt of flame. A Jap bomb had struck home. Ann caught her breath as the ship slowed and swung out of line.

"Got one," she heard someone mutter.

Then, even in this moment of single triumph, the enemy planes gave up the fight. Those that were left turned tail and fled, flying eastward in a long straggling group. There must have been nearly a hundred of them, flying in ignominious defeat toward home.

She heard a cheer go up from those who watched with her, then a moment later Phillips shouted in her ear, fairly bellowing to make himself heard above the continuing noise of bombardment. They could not see the ships and planes that were making this attack; it came from farther north, but they knew that in that direction lay Lingayen Gulf. Even at this moment soldiers and marines from amphibious craft might be landing on the shores of Luzon.

For a moment Ann was too exultant at the tremendous significance of this knowledge to attend Phillips at all. Then he took her arm and pulled her around to face him.

"We're leaving. Come, all of you. Hurry!" He seemed unusually excited, as though there were some special reason why they should leave immediately. The men caught the note of urgency in his voice and obeyed him instantly.

Ann took a final look at the ships, still plowing steadily northward under the screen of covering planes, and went with Phillips toward the tunnel. For the last time she gave a quick look around this place that had been her refuge for so short a time. She would never see it again; she knew that. But in the time she had been sheltered within its walls, the cave had meant security. She lifted her hand in a gesture of farewell and followed Phillips down through the tunnel. The ragged, weary band of one-time prisoners came after her, and within the space of minutes after the last man had left the tunnel, the stone was placed over the entrance and covered. The cave was deserted, waiting once again to offer refuge to those in need.

Ann took her place with José and Phillips near the head of the file of marchers. The wounded on makeshift stretchers were just behind her, carried by a group of guerrillas that Captain Gabriel had sent for the purpose. The liberated men, with Walters bringing up the rear as a guard, came behind. It was a long line of men, most of them nearly at the point of exhaustion or incapacitated by wounds. If they should meet a Jap patrol now—Ann thrust the thought from her mind. José would guide them; he knew what he was doing. She must trust in him to lead them safely to the meeting place with the other guerrillas. Though she could force her thoughts away from the possible dangers that lay ahead, she could not make herself stop questioning the necessity for this sudden journey. Why could they not have stayed at the cave until the beach-head to the north was secure? Captain Gabriel could have brought food to them there sufficient for an indefinite period of waiting. This hurried march toward the scene of the battle, a battle whose intensity was apparent in the continuing roar of gunfire, seemed foolhardy, an unnecessary flight into the very teeth of danger.

José was leading them over a rough and narrow trail that seemed to run along the top ridge of the mountain.

The path was rocky, nearly covered by the matted bushes that grew along the way. They could no longer see the sea to their left. The jungle trees grew even to the top of this towering mountain, hiding everything from view except the people nearest one on the line of march. It was as though they were going through a green tunnel whose walls were composed of entangling vines, massive trees, and bushes.

It was difficult for the stretcher bearers to make their way along this narrow path, and every few minutes one of them was forced to stop and disentangle the stretcher from a vine or branch that caught at it. Ann was heartsick at the back-breaking labor these bearers were undergoing, and even more concerned for the fate of her patients. Once she called out to José and made him stop so that she might get morphine from the medical kit Phillips carried. One of the wounded had screamed in agony as his stretcher jerked at an impeding branch, and she could not stand his unnecessary pain.

"I *will* give it to him," she insisted, as José at first refused to halt. "There's no necessity for him to suffer like this when I can help him." She took the box from Phillips and opened it on the ground.

"He is a man, is he not?" demanded José impatiently.

"A man and a human being," retorted Ann. José made no reply and Ann got her way. She saw Phillips wink at her and almost laughed aloud. For once she had met José in a battle of wills and won.

It was still impossible to talk without shouting, for the sound of guns was a reverberating battle march that accompanied them all the way. On brief occasions the guns ceased and the resulting silence seemed to ring more loudly than the noise of the bombardment. But during these short periods of quiet Ann had time to snatch a few words with Phillips. Everything she said was a question. All her uncertainty about their journey, her fears that they might

meet a Jap patrol, their ultimate destination and, most important, the reason for their trip took the form of inquiries. Sometimes she felt certain that Phillips was keeping something from her, that he knew something concerning her that he would not tell her. But his answers were necessarily brief, for their conversation was always cut short by the renewal of the blasting gunfire.

"Where are we going?" she asked first.

Phillips merely pointed to the north and shook his head.

A mighty outburst of exploding shells forbade another question then, and Ann looked back at the men who brought up the rear. She wondered how far José would lead them and if these men could stand such a march. The path behind was relatively clear along this section of the trail, and she could see to the very end of the line. She knew just by this one look at them that they would hold out. There was bitter weariness in every sunken line of their faces, but there was something else there, too; determination, will power, and a vital urge to go onward, to get nearer to the coast where they would once again be with the American Army. This army had come at last and they wanted to be at hand to greet the invading forces.

Ann saw Dr. Merrit just behind the last stretcher bearer and lifted her hand in a gesture of encouragement and understanding. He gave her a brief smile, then lowered his head again and came steadily on. This evidence of strength gave Ann new courage; she had no right to feel tired or uncertain in the face of what these men were undergoing on this long march. Never for one minute, she told herself, had she a right to feel sorry for herself.

"What about meeting the Japs?" she asked Phillips when the next lull came.

José answered that question. He turned around, gave her a scornful look, and said shortly, "Japs running. El Capitan reports they run like rabbits. They have no time for us."

There was reason for satisfaction in this news. If the Japs were not resisting the invasion and were running from the beachhead the Americans were bound to make a successful landing. She had seen the Jap planes turn and flee after only a moment of resistance. José's news seemed probable. But suppose the Japs ran this way? Even enemy troops in flight would not allow their small group to pass unmolested. She was about to repeat her doubts when the firing broke out once more. Suddenly something José had said the previous evening came back to her. It was a reference to a radio, something about "the radio working." That could only mean Captain Lansdale's transmitter. When the opportunity came she asked Phillips about this and learned that it was true. The transmitter had been repaired and it was by means of it that Captain Gabriel had received his instructions.

"Poor Bruce," said Ann. "He needn't have risked the flight here at all. If they'd only waited, they could have got the information from the radio."

"They had to get it when they did. Don't you realize that Captain Mitchell had to get out with the information the guerrillas gave him before this fleet reached Lingayen? It had to do with gun emplacements around the bay there. The noise you've been hearing is the ships' guns knocking out those very emplacements—or I miss my guess."

Ann merely stared at him. She had never thought much about the details of Bruce's mission. His presence had driven every other consideration from her mind, and the fact of his being near her had been the only reality to her then. She saw Phillips turn to look at her; he seemed about to add something to what he had already said and then to think better of it.

"What is it?" she demanded. "Have you anything to tell me about Bruce?" The last question came in a voice sharp with anxious fear. She knew he was thinking of Bruce and that he knew something he was reluctant to tell her.

But his face was immediately blank and he shook his head. Ann frowned and her heart seemed to sink to the pit of her stomach. He did know something he would not tell her, but at the same time she realized she would get nothing from him by questions. But this new uncertainty was an added weight on her spirits; her feet began to drag and, in spite of all her efforts, she could not keep up the pretense of hiding her exhaustion. It seemed as though every ounce of strength had been drained from her body; her feet moved with a mechanical motion, each step carrying her forward but without any conscious will of her own. She no longer had the wish to question Phillips; it required too much effort to speak or to listen. Now her only concern was to keep upright, to put one foot ahead of the other and maintain her plodding journey.

For hours, it seemed, she went on like this. Several times José called a halt for rest, but Ann dared not sit down for fear she might never get up again. During these periods she leaned against a tree and stared with lackluster eyes at the ground. Even the sound of the bombardment, increasing sometimes to an earth-shaking tornado of explosion, scarcely had any meaning now; she had become too accustomed to living with the fury of such sound about her.

It took a complete change in the monotony of their journey to rouse her once more to what was going on about her. She saw José stop suddenly at a turn in the trail ahead, then whirl about and gesture with both hands for those behind to halt. There was something in his face that told them to be quiet, to make no sound or motion that would betray their presence. Ann looked at the bushes to her right and saw that they formed only a thin screen between the trail and an open ravine which opened out below, a sort of rocky chasm at the bottom of which ran a noisy little mountain stream. It was in this direction that José had looked before motioning his followers to silence. She leaned over and peered through the bushes. Instantly she knew the reason

for José's warning. Along the bottom of the ravine, just at the water's edge, was a long file of men, soldiers in the uniform of the Japanese Army. There must have been dozens of them, and they were all moving away from the coast, even running in their haste to escape inland. It was just as José had said; the Japs were "running like rabbits."

She heard Phillips make a slight sound that might have been a chuckle of delight or an expression of contempt. She understood it in any case, for she felt the same way. The vaunted men of the Son of Heaven were running for their lives from the American assault. At least two hundred men passed through the narrow defile before the last of the group disappeared and José gave the signal to go on. The sight of the fleeing enemy revived Ann; she felt able to keep up her end now and not disgrace herself by falling by the wayside. She looked at her watch; ten-thirty. It seemed impossible that they had been on the trail three and a half hours. In little more than an hour they should be at the rendezvous. It must be at some spot overlooking Lingayen Gulf, for they had kept steadily in a northerly direction and the sound of the bombardment had grown in intensity with each moment.

Her footsteps quickened. All her weariness dropped away now. If she could see with her own eyes that the invasion was succeeding as she believed it must be, it would be the only tonic necessary. But Ann was not fated to see Lingayen Gulf and the invading fleet from a mountain top. Her first view of it was to be from a completely unexpected angle.

It lacked fifteen minutes to the hour of twelve when José halted once again, this time to turn to Phillips and announce triumphantly, "We have arrived. We are here."

Ann stared about her at the thick trees and bushes, the narrow trail that stretched before them. The outlook was no different from anything she had seen for the past five hours. What did José mean? Why should this particular

spot be chosen as a meeting place? Then she heard José laugh, a sound that showed he was enjoying the amazement on the faces of those nearest him. He stepped off the trail to the left on the seaward side and pushed aside the mat of bushes. Phillips was close on his heels with Ann behind him. They saw the amazing spectacle before them at the same moment.

It was a long, narrow cleared area, running at a slant along the crest of the mountain ridge. But it was not the fact that a landing strip had been hacked from the very top of this wooded mountain that held them silent and unmoving at its edge. It was the plane, a small single-seated monoplane, very much like the one Bruce had flown from that other landing strip the day before, that riveted their attention. Ann looked at it, saw several men standing near it, even felt for a moment that one of the men was particularly well known to her. Through a haze of dawning comprehension she knew who it was and why he was there.

"Thank heaven!" She heard Phillips cry out, but the exclamation meant nothing at the moment. It was not until he turned to her, grabbed her arm and shook it in an uncontrollable outburst of excitement, that she began to understand. Then she heard him saying something in a quick voice that cleared away the last doubts that she was not dreaming of the sight before her eyes.

"I didn't dare tell you," he cried. "I was afraid he couldn't make it, that something would stop his getting here to take you out, so I—"

But Ann did not let him finish. She knew now that the man near the plane who had seemed so familiar was Bruce; that he had come back! She took a step forward, cried out his name in a voice that did not rise above a whisper. Then her knees gave way beneath her and she sank to the ground. She did not faint, but it was impossible to move, even to realize what was going on. She heard as though from a long

distance Bruce's answering shout, then a moment later felt him lift her in his arms and hold her close.

"Bruce, Bruce, Bruce!" She was trying to say his name aloud, but the word could not be heard. He was talking to Phillips and to José, not listening to her but holding her tightly. It was not important that she was trying to speak to him; her presence, the fact that she was close to him, was all that mattered to Bruce now. She lay with her head on his shoulder, knowing that there was no longer any reason for her to think for herself. For this moment at least she was safe. She did not listen to what the men were saying; their words were a blur, and only the tone of Bruce's voice penetrated her profound sense of joy.

It was not until Bruce turned away, still carrying her in his arms, that she roused herself. Then she knew that he was taking her away, that he intended to fly her off the island in the plane. She jerked away from him and slid down to the ground.

"Bruce, you can't; those men, the prisoners, the wounded. What are they going to do? Why should I be the one to leave? Phillips, Phillips, don't let him!"

Bruce's hand was over her mouth, stopping her wild protests. "Orders, Miss Bartlett," he said quietly. "Orders from your chief. You're to report back to the hospital ship at once."

"The—the hospital ship!"

"She's standing out beyond the bay about a mile. I'm to land you on one of the carriers and a boat will take you to the *Sea Haven*. It's orders!" Bruce spoke sternly, not as he usually addressed her, and Ann knew suddenly that she had no right to protest, that he was carrying out orders and that she must obey them.

She looked up at him, saw his face relax as he smiled down at her. "All right," she murmured. "But I want to say good-by to Phillips. Where is he going? Where are they all going?"

Phillips had come forward and now stood beside her with his hand outstretched. He had heard her questions and answered for Bruce. "It's only a short way down to the beachhead," he said quietly. "We are to meet our men down there. The wounded men will be taken care of in the field hospitals. You needn't worry about them or the officers from the prison. It's all been arranged."

"You sound like José." Ann's voice broke. "I don't know why I should have any special consideration."

"Orders," said Phillips. He smiled again.

She gripped his hand in both of hers, her eyes suddenly blinded with tears. "Phillips, I can't—you know I—" She could not go on.

"Thank you, Miss Bartlett." He spoke formally, embarrassed by her unspoken gratitude. "You've been—been swell," he ended lamely.

"I'll see you on the *Sea Haven*," she said, as Bruce took her arm. Somehow it seemed a tame ending to their days of uncertainty, danger, and friendship. She wanted to say something, to tell him how much he had done to help her through those days. But there was nothing to say; there were no words to express her feeling. She shook his hand again and turned to look for José to say good-by. But José had forgotten her. He had done his duty, had led her to the arranged meeting place at the agreed time. His concern for her was over. She heard his voice calling to the men behind him, exhorting them to continue their march.

"Say good-by to all of them," she told Phillips.

He nodded, lifted his hand in a farewell salute, and disappeared behind the screen of bushes at the edge of the landing strip. A moment later she heard José shouting for him to come to the head of the column. She could not see the line of marching men, but in her mind's eye they were vividly alive; the weary, stumbling, determined men walking once again to their rendezvous with their comrades on the beachhead.

"God bless you and keep you safe," she whispered.

Bruce caught the murmur of words and put his arm across her shoulders. "They'll be all right," he said. "They haven't far to go and will be well taken care of. The beach-head is already secured. We've landed hundreds of troops. Hadn't you noticed that the heavy bombardment has stopped?"

Ann looked at him with a frown of concentration. "It's been going so long," she said. "I think the sound of guns will never stop in my ears. Oh, Bruce, I can't believe it. You remember how it was when we were here before?"

"I remember. Don't think of it." He spoke through tightened lips. His voice lightened again as he said, "The Filipinos came swarming out on the beach to greet the troops; that's one reason they had to stop the heavy firing—for fear of killing some of them."

Even though the ships' guns had ceased, the sharp bursts of machine-gun bullets rattled incessantly and formed a chaotic pattern of sound against the peace of this mountain top. They reached the plane and Bruce spoke to the half dozen men, native guerrillas, who stood by. Then he lifted her up and set her down in the cockpit. There was scarcely any room for her, and only by squeezing herself behind the pilot's seat was she able to find space. Bruce climbed into the plane and reached toward the throttle. In another moment the roar of the engine would drown out all hope of making herself heard, all chance to talk to him. She knew that within a few minutes she would be set down on the deck of the carrier, that she must say good-by to Bruce for another period of time.

"Wait!" She reached forward and caught his hand. "Bruce, wait a minute. We won't have another chance to talk. I want to know so many things; when will I see you again? Where are you on duty now?" She was talking against time, for she knew he must take off immediately. "I know what you've been doing in the past six months. I

understand all that, but I don't think I could stand it if we don't see each other again soon."

Bruce turned abruptly and looked at her. "Ann, if only you'd agree to marry me now and— No, I know, I can't ask it. We'll have it the way we've always planned, and it won't be long now. Somehow I know it won't be long. We've begun; we're on the road back. This invasion is the beginning."

Ann nodded, her throat tight with unshed tears.

His hand closed over hers and he drew her down toward him. "I won't be far from you now," he whispered a moment later. "We're in this together; we'll both go on as before, but we'll be together. I won't be far away from you now."

She nodded again as Bruce kissed her once more. Then he turned and started the plane's motor; she felt the wheels move slowly over the rough landing strip and leaned out over the side to look down. The plane rose into the air, lifted above the trees. A moment later there was nothing below but a mass of indistinguishable green; the island of Luzon became a blur beneath her. She raised her eyes and looked ahead, out toward the sea where the shape and outline of countless ships spelled the hope of the future. One of those ships was the *Sea Haven*. She was a part of this massive liberation movement; she and thousands like her had returned as they had promised.



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